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MAJOR PROJECT

STUDY OF

THE

IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF

FRANCIS SPENCER

Submitted by

Robert Allen Quinn

(A.B., Emmanuel College, 1941)

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I OPINIONS OF CRITICS ON THE LITERARY WORK OF FRANCIS THOMPSON	7
II IMAGES OF THE LITURGY	14
III IMAGES OF NATURE	36
IV MISCELLANEOUS IMAGES	58
V CONCLUSION	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

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INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of literature in England during the nineteenth century was the Romantic Movement, a movement toward nature worship and beauty worship. It was during the latter part of this century that Francis Thompson, transcending the philosophy of the Romantic school, found inspiration for his poetry in the liturgy of the Church and in the magnificence of nature. It was he who gave to the English world of this period the true perspective of the place that nature holds in the universe.

He realized the intimate union of his soul with the living God--his belief was not in harmony with the vague pantheism of the Victorian age. "We never find in him the uneasy agnosticism of Matthew Arnold or the ample beliefs of Robert Browning. In his poetry it is not the human souls which grope among shadows in search of God, but God Who pursues the wandering soul of the poet."¹

Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou are!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in
My arms.²

¹Rooker, K., Francis Thompson, Bruges, London, 1912, p. 20.

²Connelly, Terence L., S. J., Poems of Francis Thompson, D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1941. p. 81.

INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics of literature in England during the nineteenth century was the Romantic Movement, a movement toward nature worship and beauty worship. It was during the latter part of this century that Francis Thompson, transmuting the philosophy of the Romantic school, found inspiration for his poetry in the life of the Church and in the magnificence of nature. It was he who gave to the English world of this period the true perspective of the place that nature holds in the universe.

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Whom wilt thou find to love beside thee,
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But that thou mightest seek in it
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Francis Thompson has often been referred to as the poet of the liturgy and of nature. In this work, the investigator purposes to make an intensive study of the imagery contained in the poetry of Francis Thompson in order thereby to reveal (1) his intimate knowledge of the liturgy of the Catholic Church, and (2) his deep reverence for nature as a stepping-stone to the Creator of all Beauty, Who is not nature but Who is present in Nature.

The term "image" used herein includes not only metaphor, but also simile, metonymy, personification, antithesis, contrast, and hyperbole.

Francis Thompson does not directly express the beauties of the eternal world as they exist because they are inexpressible. Therefore, he uses what is to him the most appropriate language in the natural order as symbols to describe the supernatural order. Thompson's imagery may be termed as a type of translation from heaven to earth, as in the human he describes the divine. He is particularly concerned with the simile and contrast in his imagery but there are many instances of the other figures of speech.

Imagery is a most appropriate expression of religious thought and it is indispensable for the expression of religious ideas because it is the natural language of religion. There are no words which directly describe heavenly realities. Thus imagery is the using of objects belonging to one order of being to explain, represent, picture forth objects belonging to another order. Thus its most characteristic form is the using of material objects as images of immaterial, spiritual things.³

³Brown, Stephen J., The World of Imagery, Kegan, Paul Trubner and Co., Ltd., London, 1927, p. 18

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By liturgy here is meant the official worship of the Catholic Church. "It is the official life of the Church. It is the Church in action praising and adoring God through the Mystical Body of Christ."⁴ The Vicar of Christ, in extolling the liturgy, says:

What a spectacle of heaven and earth is not the Church in prayer. For centuries without interruption from midnight to midnight is repeated on earth the divine psalmody of the inspired canticle! There is no hour of the day that is not hallowed by its special liturgy; there is no stage of life, great or small, that has not its part in the thanksgiving, praise, supplication, reparation of the common prayer of the Mystical Body of Christ.⁵

The liturgy furnishes a wealth of ideas for rich poetry because it is here that the most profound and brilliant images may be found to clarify for the material mind the infinite expanse of the immaterial. The sun suggested to the ancients the ideas of stability, eternity, immortality, happiness, liberty, salvation, goodness, omnipresence, omniscience. To the liturgists it suggests the Son of God, Christ, Who is characterized by all these attributes. The work done by God remains hidden as its nature requires, but is no secret. Men can apprehend through the liturgy what is being wrought in them. God descends to man's natural need of material images for his apprehension of spiritual realities; yet, there is a

⁴Howard, E. D., "The Liturgy", Orate Fratres, Vol. XII, No. 6, April 17, 1938, p. 277.

⁵Pope Pius XI, "Encyclical: Caritate Christi Compulsi", Catholic Mind, Vol. XXX, No. 12, June, 1932, pp. 236.

By liturgy here is meant the official worship of the Catholic Church. "It is the official life of the Church. It is the Church in action praying and adoring God through the Mystical Body of Christ." The Vicar of Christ, in exclaiming the liturgy, says:

What a spectacle of heaven and earth is not the Church in prayer. For centuries without interruption from midnight to midnight is repeated on earth the divine passion of the crucified Christ! There is no hour of the day that is not followed by its special liturgy: there is no stage of life, great or small, that has not its part in the thanksgiving, praise, supplication, repetition of the common prayer of the Mystical Body of Christ.

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more exalted reason why the mysterious operation of God in the depths of the soul should be clothed with the material. The Human Nature of Christ is an instrument of the divine deification of the human soul. The sacraments are the prolongation of the Sacred Humanity. They are the elements used instrumentally in the communication of the divine.

Among the symbols used in the liturgy, light stands out. A few examples will clearly show that union of the material and spiritual light into one experience, the union of natural life with the supernatural life, which is the Risen Christ, in the glory of His Redeeming Act; and, lastly, that demonstration of Christ as the Source of all light and of all that light means, as the Illumination of which all other light can be but a derivation. Among the most magnificent images that the poet uses is that of the Sacred Host which is the symbol of created world as restored to harmony according to the original intention of God.

By nature here is meant the creations of God: sun, moon, stars, flowers, trees, water and animal life.

Thompson manifests a deep appreciation for nature. He views it not in and for itself but as a reminder of the Author of all nature. His most forceful images are those of the flowers which represent the mystic garden of God.

Francis Thompson contributed a great deal to the elevation of human dignity and the restoration of man's rightful place in the order of creation. For it is for God that man was

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created.⁶

For in him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and in him. And he is before all, and by him all things consist.⁷

The Divine nature is distinct from the nature of man, not one with man as many of the nineteenth century poets proposed in their works.

The general plan and inspiration of the **present** study is that of Stephen J. Brown in The World of Imagery.⁸ Father Brown believes that a study of imagery has, from many points of view, an interest and significance that justifies the labor of research. In his volumes, Father Brown shows how each figure of speech may add to the richness of the thought in poetry and demonstrates it by many examples of poems from the great English Masters. He shows particularly the many instances of imagery used in Shakespeare, who is considered by many to have used imagery most skillfully in his works.

It may be claimed that from the study of imagery one can derive a greater insight into language itself. Furthermore, images enlarge and qualify; they create, too, insofar as they bear and nourish thoughts that can only be expressed through them. They belong to the highest poetry, the poetry of revelation and the intellect.⁹

⁶St. Augustine, Confessions.

⁷St. Paul, Epistle to the Colossians, Chapter I, verses 16, 17.

⁸Brown, S. J., op. cit.

⁹Maynell, Everard, The Life of Francis Thompson, Burns, Oates and Washburne, Ltd., London, 1926, p. 161.

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Thompson's poetry and theology abide by the image; "it was a necessity of their nature to penetrate beyond the barrier of expression and revelation."¹⁰ He found in poetry the highest human motives, the basis of his idealism.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,¹¹
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

On December 16, 1853, Francis Thompson was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, where his father practiced medicine. In his childhood he displayed mannerisms that betrayed genius to the observant eye, but to his parents he became a "problem child". He began to dwell in an imaginary world, a world unknown and unintelligible to his companions. His mother and father were devout and ardent converts to the Roman Catholic Faith, and Francis was characterized by a deep religious fervor. When Thompson was eleven years of age, his father sent him to the Catholic College at Douce with the purpose of preparing him for the priesthood. However, the boy's home life frustrated and even was experienced the

¹⁰Ibid.

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CHAPTER I
OPINIONS OF CRITICS ON THE LITERARY WORK OF
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Francis Thompson never makes easy reading in thought or in form. He is a most universal personality and a most universal poet. The story of his life contains comparatively few incidents and most of these are shrouded behind a veil which it is impossible to lift. But what is known is of so poignant a character that it saturates everything that he has written.¹

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¹Wright, T. H., The Poetry of Francis Thompson, George J. Harrap and Co., Ltd., London, 1927, p. 1.

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his parents, his friends, and himself.

The boy was charged with a natural indolence; it was not indolence but a failure to contact between his inner world and the world of clocks and watches and jobs to be done.²

This nature is incompatible with the obligations and responsibilities that are incumbent upon one in the service of God.

To fill the gap that was left vacant on his return from Ushaw, a medical and scientific career was chosen for Thompson by his father.

For six years the aimless pretence was kept up and it ended in a complete alienation of his father. Except for a few scattered scientific facts, which as a poet he afterwards treasured, and a considerable knowledge of cricket gained by assiduous attendance at the Old Trafford ground, the only effects of the six years daily traveling to Manchester was the habit of using public libraries as a study.³

Then followed a period of distressing failure in an attempt to gain a place in life. The failures were due to an incompatibility in his nature with the opportunities afforded him but perhaps in a large measure to the opium habit which he had unfortunately contracted. The unpleasant difficult years on the streets of London wrought havoc on the body of Francis Thompson, but

. . . not his happiness, nor his tenderness, nor his sensibility had been marred like his constitution, by his experiences. To be the target of such

²Megroz, Rudolph L., Francis Thompson: Poet of Earth and Heaven, Faber and Gwyer, London, 1928, p. 21.

³Ibid., p. 22.

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The boy was charged with a natural indifference; it was not indifference but a failure to connect between his inner world and the world of others and wishes and jobs to be done.

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^ibid., p. 22.

pains as it is the habit of the world to deplore as the extreme of disaster and yet to keep alive the young flame of his poetry; to be given under compulsion to watch the ignominies of the town, and yet never to think himself ignominious; to establish the certitude of his virtue, to keep flourishing an infinite tenderness and capability for delicacies, gentilezze of love--these were the triumphs of his immunity.⁴

Yet the strong hand of God plucked him, as it were, from the state of oblivion toward which this life was leading and brought him the friendship of two people who were to be instrumental in saving for the world a poet who is immortal. Wilfred and Alice Meynell introduced him into their home and provided him with hopes and courage in his native ability as a poet. It was during this period that Thompson, under the guidance of the priests at the Premonstratensian priory, conquered the opium habit, which victory lifted from him the veil of misery and mystery. At this period his best writings were produced.

Returning to London he was a frequent guest of the Meynells, delighting in the privilege of acquainting himself with the Meynell children, who were the subjects of some of the most productive poems Thompson wrote. It was during this time that the genius of Thompson flowered and his mind was cleared, having broken that habit which of necessity hinders the function of the intellect. "The opportunity was given him to pursue the true calling of his life and the Meynells gave him what he most needed--sympathy and understanding."⁵

⁴Meynell, Everard, op. cit., p. 74.

⁵Wright, T. H., op. cit., p. 22.

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Meynell, Edward, op. cit., p. 74.
Wright, F. H., op. cit., p. 22.

However, ill health and deprivation exacted payment, and in order to keep the life stream running, he again resumed the drugh gabit. It closed forever the genius of his poetry, but

. . . instead of poetry he produced much golden prose which some declare to be finer than his verse. There he truly expressed much genuine vision, but one cannot but feel that the vision tends to become at times merely visionary, suggesting that a great spirit has lost its sure foothold in reality. But he kept it to the end, a delicately beautiful mind and heart.⁶

The poetry of Francis Thompson has received much adverse criticism among his contemporaries. He has been accused of using a profusion of imagery that to some makes his poetry unreal and confusing. Another characteristic of Thompson's verse is his use of big words, particularly words that are of his own making. Lionel Johnson, in speaking of Francis Thompson, says that Thompson has done more to harm the English language than to enrich it. There is also a tendency to laden his work with thought and imagery that may detract from the simplicity of his work, but for this he made noble amends.

However, if the exact shades of the poet's thoughts cannot always be comprehended immediately, if the exact meaning is not evident, the ideas are clear and the glory of colors is present though its richness may be too splendid for immediated comprehension. Writing on this aspect of the poet's works, a writer in the Irish Rosary for September, 1912 says:

⁶Meynell, Everard, Op. cit., p. 2

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... There is no mist or haze attached to his imagery. They will catch, sway the mind's breath at the first flash, but when they have been read carefully, they will soon become clear-seen and clear-cut, even brilliant in their obscurity, obvious perhaps by their very unexpectedness. His most intricate harmonies are loaded with a rush of music that may perplex, but which works itself out in the end, perhaps upon the quaver of the last syllable; the feeling remains with the reader all the time that nobody else could have written it, and that Thompson himself could not have written anything in himself; and that his words and expressions have waited a thousand years for his coming to claim and set them to the highest use. He did not open his images like skylights to make clear a chance meaning here and there in his work, but he opened as it were a whole apse of windows to illuminate one central idea throned altar-wise. Each of his poems is builded delicately, like a great window of stained glass, and every fragment of it is filled with the rich color inherent to his words. At the first rush of thought, the eyes are dazzled as by a sudden blaze from above, yet at a little distance every word falls harmonized and ordered into a network of metre, which grapple color to color and syllable to syllable as simply and convincingly as the beaded lead that controls the splendoured glories of some rose-window.⁷

To understand Thompson's poetry there must be a clear concept of the relationship between the reality and the ideal. Without this comprehension much of his poetry is abstruse; with it, new, rich, and inspiring meanings unfold. It is the vision of the Divine ideal that inspires the beautiful apostrophe of the "Kingdom of God".

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee.⁸

⁷Thomson, John, Francis Thompson: Poet and Mystic, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., Ltd. 1923, p. 93.

⁸Connolly, Terrence L., op. cit., p. 293.

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Thomson, John, *Francis Thompson: Poet and Mystic*, Blomkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., Ltd. 1923, p. 93.
Connolly, Terrence L., op. cit., p. 297.

Thompson's absorption in the ideal carried over to his daily life so that he seemed the most impractical of men.⁹

To those who claim that Francis Thompson is vague and incomprehensible, G. K. Chesterton explains the difficulty of the latter nineteenth century critics in interpreting his work.

. . . But none of these Victorians were able to understand Francis Thompson. His skyscraping humility, his mountains of musical delight, his occasional blasphemies.¹⁰

Thompson's poetry abounds in imagery and sometimes to excess. Yet his thought is so great and so exalted that his superb images become an excellent means of bringing forth the thoughts he is trying to convey.

There is such a wealth of allusion and so marked a splendour of imagery that readers have as much trouble finding their way about as has a man, who, ignorant of astronomy, tries to identify and observe the stars.¹¹

Thompson has a message to deliver to the world. Not a message of sensual delight, not a message of pure intellectual delight, but the message of the Almighty to His creatures.

If the message of Shelley was--as it seems to have been--that love and beauty shall endure to unite all things; and the message of Keats to restore the spirit of the Greeks and "Art for Art's sake"; that of Francis Thompson is to proclaim not only the embroidery on the veil, but the glory

⁹Meynell, Everard, op. cit.,

¹⁰Chesterton, G. K., The Victorian Age, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1925, pp. 212-213.

¹¹Connolly, Terrence L., op. cit., p. 211.

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Weymouth, Everett, op. cit., p. 211.
 Chesterton, G. E., *The Victorian Age*, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1935, pp. 212-213.
 Connolly, Torrance L., op. cit., p. 211.

of the veiled One Himself, the "beauty ever ancient, ever new", and to represent the cry of old.¹³

The discussion of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first treats of the images referring to the liturgical ceremonies; the second, of those referring to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ; and the third, of those referring to the Sacraments.

Part One

In this section the investigation is concerned with the images used by Thompson to refer to the Liturgical ceremonies:

1. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
2. Vespers, the evening hour of the Divine Office
3. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Francis Thompson has been referred to as the "epic poet of modern Catholicism."¹ Perhaps this phrase has been applied to him because of his use of such expressions as "great-united," "etels-aureole." But in spite of such profusion of imagery present in Thompson's poetry, the language of the liturgy is not something superficial or exotic; it is something active and appropriate.² Thompson understood the meaning of symbolism of the ritual, for to him it was Christ's manifestation to the Christians.³ Creatures are beings created with a final

¹ Gardner, Edmund, "The Poetry of Francis Thompson", North, London, February, 1898.

² Alexander, Gilbert, J. J., The Catholic Literary Revival, New York, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1916, p. 157.

¹³ Thomson, John, op. cit., p. 105.

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CHAPTER II

IMAGES OF THE LITURGY

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¹Gardner, Edmund, "The Poetry of Francis Thompson", Month, London, February, 1898.

²Alexander, Calvert, J. J., The Catholic Literary Revival, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1935, p. 167.

³Ibid., p. 168.

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¹Gardner, Edmund, "The Poetry of Francis Thompson", Month, London, February, 1898.
²Alexander, Oliver, J. J., The Catholic Literary Revival, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1935, p. 107.
³Ibid., p. 168.

intellect. Particular objects perceived by the senses determine more easily knowledge by which individuals might comprehend truths. Christ and His Church as teachers have realized this essential truth and to make truths more appealing and mysteries less intangible, outward manifestations are used in religious exercises. Thus, a supernatural gift that God bestows on creatures, is grace, and the main channels of grace in the Christian religion are the seven Sacraments, which are exterior manifestations of inward grace. When Thompson symbolizes these truths he is called a liturgical poet.

Francis Thompson was to find in the doctrine of the Mystical Body that unity of vision of which the nineteenth century poets were so devoid; and it was to fill the void which materialism and the disillusionment of pantheism had left for later artists that Thompson's poetry was written.⁴

Of all his poems, the one which most carries the impress of the liturgy is the "Orient Ode."⁵ "This is not a song of the sun but a song to Christ Whom the Church frequently refers to as 'Oriens'--the One arising in the East like the sun."⁶ The "Orient Ode" is taken from the liturgy of Holy Saturday. The altar is stripped of all its linens and is bare. The death of Christ on Good Friday is still being mourned by the Church on Holy Saturday morning. The service of Holy Saturday begins with this great darkness and bareness commemorating

⁴Alexander, Calvert, S. J., op. cit., p. 168.

⁵Connolly, Terrence, S. J., op. cit., p. 163.

⁶Connolly, Terrence, S. J., op. cit., p. 450.

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Of all his poems, the one which most carries the impress of the liturgy is the "Gospel Ode." "This is not a song of the soul but a song to Christ whom the Church gloriously refers to as 'Christ'--the One arising in the East like the sun." The "Gospel Ode" is taken from the liturgy of Holy Saturday. The altar is stripped of all its linens and is bare. The death of Christ on Good Friday is still being mourned by the Church on Holy Saturday morning. The service of Holy Saturday begins with this great darkness and barrenness commemorating

Alexander, Givens, S. L., op. cit., p. 168.
 Connolly, Thomas, S. L., op. cit., p. 168.
 Connolly, Thomas, S. L., op. cit., p. 169.

Christ's death. Then at the Gloria of the Mass, the bells are rung, the candles are lighted, and the organ is again intoned, showing the Resurrection of Christ in His full splendour. Thus from death to life, from darkness to light, the Church shows in her liturgy that great mystery of the Resurrection.⁷

Lo, in the sanctuaried East,
 Day, a dedicated priest
 In all his robes pontifical exprest,
 Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly,
 From out its Orient tabernacle drawn;
 Yon orb'd sacrament confest
 Which sprinkles benediction through the dawn;
 And when the grave procession's ceased
 The earth with due illustrious rite
 Blessed,--ere the frail fingers featly
 Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte
 His sacerdotal stoles unvest--
 Sets, for high close of the mysterious feast,
 The sun in aughst exposition meetly
 Within the flaming monstrance of the West.⁸

Francis Thompson uses the sun to help us to comprehend the liturgy. He compares the sun to the Blessed Sacrament in the Church ceremony of Benediction. Upon entering the sanctuary the vested priest, accompanied by an acolyte, kneels for a moment at the foot of the altar, then ascends toward the tabernacle, removes the Blessed Sacrament, places it in a golden monstrance for the Faithful to worship. The imagery in the poem is very symbolic. Day is the priest, the East is the sanctuary, twilight is the acolyte, the sun is the Sacred Host, the process of the sun is the Eucharistic

⁷Connolly, Terrence, S.J., op. cit., p. 452

⁸Ibid., p. 163

Christ's death. Then at the Gloria at the Mass, the bells are rung, the candles are lighted, and the organ is again played, showing the Resurrection of Christ in His full splendor. Thus from death to life, from darkness to light, the Gospel shows in her liturgy that great mystery of the Resurrection.

So, in the sanctified East,
 Day, a dedicated priest
 In all his robes pontifical exults,
 Lifts slowly, lifts awesomely,
 From out his breast the sacred Host;
 You order sacrament consecrate
 Which spiritual benediction through the laws;
 And when the grave procession's ceased
 The altar with due illustrations rises
 Blessed,--ere the frail fingers fastly
 Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte
 His sacerdotial stole unveils--
 Sets, for high altar of the mysterious feast,
 The sun in august exaltation ready
 Within the flaming monstrance of the East.

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procession, West is the monstrance.⁹ Such is the vastness of Thompson's imagery and the display of color and light that he portrays in his work.

Again in "A Corymbus for Autumn", Thompson finds his inspiration in liturgical ceremonies.

Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
 All Nature sacerdotal seems, and thou.
 The calm hour strikes on yon golden gong,
 In tones of floating and mellow light
 A spreading summons to even-song:
 See how there
 The cowled Night
 Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
 What is this feel of incense everywhere?
 Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,
 Upwafted by the solemn thurifer,
 The mighty Spirit unknown,
 That swingeth the slow earth before the embannered
 Throne?¹⁰

Here the poet uses the ceremony of Vespers as an image wherein the vested priest at eventide enters the sanctuary and chants psalms taken from both the New and the Old Testament. Nature is the vested priest who comes to chant vespers in the sanctuary of the Western Sky. He has come there by the "mellow light struck on yon golden gong of an autumn sunset." Night is the cowled monk kneeling on the Eastern sanctuary stair. The Holy Spirit swings the earth before the throne of God as the censor swings the censor before the Most Blessed Sacrament. The ceremony must end at eventide just as the sunset must disappear and the shade

⁹Ibid., p. 453.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 99.

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Again in "A Gorythas for Autumn", Thompson finds his

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Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
 All Nature sacerdotal seems, and then,
 The calm hour strikes on your golden song,
 In tones of floating and mellow light
 A spreading summons to even-song:
 See how there
 The cowed Night
 Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
 What is this fool of incense everywhere?
 Olfacts it roasts folds of the bishop-ambed clouds,
 Upstated by the solemn shunter,
 The mighty Spirit unknown,
 That swinge the slow earth before the embannered
 Throne!

Here the poet uses the ceremony of Vespers as an image
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 before the throne of God as the cantor swinge the cantor
 before the Most Blessed Sacrament. The ceremony must end at
 evening just as the sunset must disappear and the shade

of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Weave, hands angelical
Weave a woof of flesh to pall
Weave, hands angelical
Flesh to pall our Viola.²¹

A pall is the covering used in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to cover the consecrated wine. In the mystery of the Holy Sacrifice, at the words of the Consecration, "This is My Blood," the consecrated wine becomes the Blood of Jesus Christ. When Thompson uses this image of a pall covering the body of the child Viola, he is representing the sacredness of the child.

Referring to the feast of Pentecost, Thompson makes use of the imagery in the liturgy in the "Night of Forebeing".

O Nature, never-done
Ungaped at Pentecostal miracle
We hear thee each man in his proper tongue.²²

On the feast of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles and bestowed on them the gift of tongues wherein they could converse in and understand the tongues of various nations. Here Thompson understands by the "proper tongue" the manner in which Nature speaks to him, which is "the tongues of the Catholic faith."²³

The liturgical vestments used in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass provides colorful imagery for his poetry. He refers

21) Ibid., p. 12.

22) Ibid., p. 172.

23. Ibid. p. 462.

of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Weave, hands angelical
Weave a web of flesh to pall
Weave, hands angelical
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21) *Ibid.*, p. 12.
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In slow wreaths folden
 Around yon censer, sphered, golden
 Vague Vesper's fumes aspire
 And glimmering to eclipse,
 The long laburnum drips
 Its honey of wild flame, its jocund spilth of fire."¹⁵

"Yon censer" is the sun. "Vesper's fumes" are clouds resembling the incense. Here Thompson uses the sun and the moon as images of the liturgy.¹⁶

In "Assumpta Maria" the reference to the liturgy is from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"Treading with resilient gesture
 Air and with that cup divine."¹⁷

"Cup divine" is an image of Christ's body in which the Divinity dwelt.¹⁸ Thompson in this poem refers to the Blood and Water which is a symbol that is used frequently in the liturgy of the Church. Blood and Sun are symbolic of Christ's Divinity and water and moon are symbolic of Christ's humanity.¹⁹ In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass during the Offertory a few drops of water are added to the wine symbolizing that mystery by which the divine and human natures are united together in One Person, namely, the Mystery of the Incarnation when the Word was made flesh.²⁰

Again Francis Thompson makes reference to the liturgy

15) Ibid., p. 49.

16) Ibid., p. 337.

17) Ibid., p. 188.

18) Ibid., p. 480

19) Ibid., loc. cit.

20) Gehr, Nicholas, The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Herder Book Co., New York, 1933, p. 512.

In slow wretched folds
 Around you censer, agitated, golden
 Vague Vesper's flames aspire
 And glimmering to eclipse
 The long laboring drip
 Its honey of wild flame, its golden splash of fire.¹⁵

"You censer" is the sun. "Vesper's flames" are clouds re-
 sembling the incense. Here Thompson uses the sun and the
 moon as images of the liturgy.¹⁶

In "Assumptio Mariae" the reference to the liturgy is
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 Air and with that cup divine."¹⁷

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- 15) *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 16) *Ibid.*, p. 337.
 17) *Ibid.*, p. 188.
 18) *Ibid.*, p. 430.
 19) *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
 20) *Ibid.*, Nicholas, The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,
 Herder Book Co., New York, 1933, p. 312.

night appear as in death.¹¹

"Round the earth still and stark
Heaven's death-lights kindly, yellow spark by spark,
Beneath the dreadful catafalque of the dark."¹²

The stars are the candles that are lighted about the catafalque
"Night".¹³

In the "Mistress of Vision" the poet again uses the image of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the ceremony of Benediction. However, the imagery is present in the censor who swings the censer before the Exposed Host.

"The sun that lit the garden wholly
Low vibrant visible
Tempered glory woke;
And it seemed solely
Like a silver thurible
Solemnly swinging, slowly
Fuming clouds of golden fire;
For a cloud of incense-smoke."¹⁴

The glory of God seemed like a silver thurible slowly swung fuming clouds of fire ascending in a cloud of incense to God. God, as the sun, was lowered to men and made visible to them through Christ, Who took a human form just as He in the ceremony of Benediction is placed in the golden monstrance and lowered to man to be adored.

In "Sister Songs II" he draws his imagery from the ceremony of Vespers.

---But lo! at length the day is lingered out,
At length my Ariel lays his viol by;
We sing no more to thee, child, he and I;
The day is lingered out:

¹¹Ibid., p. 387.

¹²Ibid., p. 99.

¹³Ibid., p. 387.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 152.

might appear as in death. 11

"Round the earth all and dark
Heaven's dark-blue mantle
beneath the awful radiance of the dark." 12

The stars are the candles that are lighted about the cathedral

"light." 13

In the "Mistress of Vision" the poet again uses the

image of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the ceremony of

Benediction. However, the imagery is present in the canon

who swings the censor before the exposed Host.

"The sun that lit the garden wholly
Low vibrant visible
Tapered glory woke;
And it seemed solely
Like a silver thurible
Colouredly swayed, slowly
Turning clouds of golden fire;
For a cloud of incense-smoke." 14

The glory of God seemed like a silver thurible slowly

swung turning clouds of fire ascending in a cloud of incense

to God. God, as the sun, was lowered to men and made visible

to them through Christ, who took a human form just as He is

the ceremony of Benediction is placed in the golden monstrance

and lowered to man to be adored.

In "Glacier Songs II" he draws his imagery from the

ceremony of Vespers.

---But for at length the day is fingered out,
At length my Ariel lays his viol by;
We sing no more to thee, child, no and I;
The day is fingered out.

11 Ibid., p. 387.
12 Ibid., p. 39.
13 Ibid., p. 387.
14 Ibid., p. 387.

to spring as green-amiced. An amice is a liturgical vestment worn over the shoulders of the priest in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Green, considered an intermediary color, is used on days when no marked characteristic is predominant. It is the color of sprouting fields expressive of the hope of life.

Where its umbrage was enrooted
Sat, white-suited
Sat, green-amiced and barefooted
Spring, and her minsrely.²⁴

Again he draws his imagery from the victim of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the sun.

Thou for the life of all that live
The victim daily born and sacrificed
To whom the opinion of this longing verse
Beats but with fire which first thyself didst give
To thee, O Sun--or is't perchance to Christ?²⁵

"The Victim daily born and sacrificed" is Christ in the Mass just as the sun is daily born and descends in the West.²⁶

The heavens and the earth are united in waiting its daily advent, and the poet could hasten to bring the most fragrant of his verses to that desired "epiphany"; not only does he bring his enraptured thought so near to all spiritual blessing as he images forth the achievements of the physical sun, but his thoughts burst their bounds. Not only is the sun incarnated in this swelling symbolism, but he sees in it the image of the Divine Sacrifice, and he knows that what he was realizing so mightily could only be fulfilled in Him whoses personality is higher than all suns.²⁷

Benediction again becomes an object of vivid imagery,

²⁴Ibid., p. 36.

²⁵Ibid., p. 168.

²⁶Ibid., p. 459.

²⁷Wright, Reverend J., Francis Thompson and His Poetry
London: Harap and Co., 1937, p. 107.

and incense and the censer are again referred to.

The heart a sensered fire whence fuming chants
aspire
Is fed with oozed gums of precious pain;
And unrest swings denser, denser, the fragrance
from the censer,
With the heart strings for its quivering chain.²⁸

The heart is a censer within which is the glowing coal of love. "This censer suspended upon the 'Quivering chain of man's heart strings' is swayed by the soul's unrest, while the fire within it is fed with precious pain and from it chants of God's praise rise up in the smoke of incense."²⁹

It is the falling star that trails the light,
It is the breaking wave that hath the might,
The passing shower that rainbows maniple.³⁰

The symbolic meaning of the maniple springs principally from a passage in the Psalms in which the word manipulus is mentioned in the sense of a sheaf of wheat: They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. "Maniple symbolizes the fruit of good works and sheaves full of merit, as well as the abundant harvest of happiness and joy, of peace and rest reaped in eternity."³¹

Thompson uses the maniple as a symbol of the joys of harvest and exultation of reward. His meaning is "rainbows, themselves symbols of hope, make of the passing shower a maniple, symbol of joy."³²

²⁸Connolly, Terrence L., S.J., op. Cit., p. 129.

²⁹Ibid., p. 447.

³⁰Ibid., p. 82.

³¹Gihhr, Rev. Micholas, op. cit., p. 285.

³²Connolly, Ibid., p. 375.

and incense and the censers are again referred to.
 The heart is a separate fire whence flaming sparks
 arise
 is fed with coals of precious pain;
 And unceasingly censers, censers, the censers
 from the censers,
 with the heart strings for its pulsating chain.²⁸

The heart is a censer which is the glowing coal
 of love. "This censer suspended upon the 'gulfing chain'
 of man's heart strings, is swayed by the soul's unrest, while
 the fire within it is fed with precious pain and from it
 censers of God's praise rise up in the smoke of incense."²⁹

It is the falling star that trails the light,
 It is the breaking wave that hath the might,
 The passing shower that rainbows mantle.³⁰

The symbolic meaning of the mantle springs principally
 from a passage in the Psalms in which the word mantle is
 mentioned in the sense of a sheet of wheat: They that sow
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 the massive symbol of hope, mark of the passing shower a
 mantle, symbol of joy."³²

²⁸Connally, *Parables*, I., 8.7., pp. 511., p. 129.
²⁹Ibid., p. 447.
³⁰Ibid., p. 82.
³¹Ibid., Rev. Michael, pp. 212., p. 285.
³²Connally, *Ibid.*, p. 375.

The image which is most uniquely Thompson's is the religious image. He employs the ceremonies of the Church to explain the natural order. The sun, symbol of Christ seems to be the most significant for he sees its setting as the great Benediction scene. The stars and the night form a background that is most appropriate. Images from Vespers and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are less in number but the exalted thought is conveyed to the reader because this type of imagery is the most versatile at his command. He builds an altar of the skies with the Sun, Christ, as its living force.

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Part Two

This section is concerned with the imagery in

1. The Passion and Death of Christ, and
2. The Resurrection of Christ.

The liturgy of the Church centers about the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Christ, Who is the Saviour of mankind, in order to atone for the sins of our first parents, died an ignominious death, outraged, insulted, and scourged by the ingratitude of men. Yet, it was by this very ignominy that Christ taught men to suffer and bear the trials and difficulties of life even joyfully and to offer them to God the Father in union with the sufferings of Christ. It is only when men act in this manner that they will gain any reward. Difficulties will ever abound, but Christ has shown the way to make them meritorious.

The Sacrifice of Christ was the supreme act of the religion of Jesus Christ. If the history of mankind from the beginning to the end were likened to a triangle, Calvary would be the height of that triangle. All events preceding the height would be an ascending slope; world events following it would be a gradual decline falling away from that height.

This is an idea familiar to all Christians. Without the Crucifixion life would be without hope, without peace.

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The liturgy of the Church centers about the passion,

death, and resurrection of Christ. Christ, who is the
Savior of mankind, in order to atone for the sins of our
first parents, died an ignominious death, outraged, in-
sulted, and scorned by the ingrates of men. Yet, it
was by this very ignominy that Christ taught men to suffer
and bear the trials and difficulties of life even joyfully
and to offer them to God the Father in union with the suf-
ferings of Christ. It is only when men act in this manner
that they will gain any reward. Difficulties will ever
abound, but Christ has shown the way to make them merito-
rious.

The Sacrifice of Christ was the supreme act of the
religion of Jesus Christ. If the history of mankind from
the beginning to the end were likened to a triangle, Cal-
vary would be the height of that triangle. All events
preceding the height would be an ascending slope; world
events following it would be a gradual decline falling
away from that height.

This is an idea familiar to all Christians. Without
the Crucifixion life would be without hope, without peace.

Thompson has grasped this meaning of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ and has likened it to many significant facts which give profound meaning and beauty to his poetry.

In "Laus Amara Doloris", Thompson makes reference to pain and hardship, which he compares to the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Hardships and trials become efficacious when offered through the merits of Christ dying on the Cross.

Thy pall in purple sovereignty was dipt
Beneath the tree of Golgotha;
And from the Hand, wherein the reed was clipt,
Thy bare and antique sceptre thou dost draw.
That God-sprung Lover to thy front allows,
Fairest, the bloody honour of His brows,
The great reversion of that diadem
Which did His drenched locks hem.
For the predestinated Man of Grief,
O regnant Pain, to thee
His subject sway elected to enfoeff.¹

On the Cross on Calvary hung two thieves with Christ: one blasphemed and cursed the dying Christ, the other, accepting grace, turned humbly to Him asking for forgiveness; and the merciful words of Jesus insured life everlasting to this "poor thief." "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."²

Since to such sweet Kingdom comest,
Remember me poor thief of song.³

Here in the poem "Assumpta Maria" an analogy is drawn

1) Ibid., p. 231.

2) St. Luke, XXIII, 43.

3) Connolly, op. cit., p. 189.

Thompson has grasped this meaning of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ and has likened it to many significant facts which give profound meaning and beauty to his poetry.

In "Lana Maria Dolores", Thompson makes reference to pain and hardship, which he compares to the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Hardships and trials become efficacious when offered through the merits of Christ dying on the cross.

The will in purple sovereignty was high
 Beneath the tree of Golgotha;
 And from the Hand, wherein the seed was sown,
 Thy bare and antique sceptre thou dost show.
 That God-ordained lover to thy front allows,
 Fairer, the bloody honour of His brow,
 The great revelation of that blood
 Which did His forehead loathe him.
 For the predestinated man of grief,
 O regal pain, to thee
 His subject way elected to entreat.

On the cross on Calvary hung two thieves with Christ;
 one blasphemed and cursed the dying Christ, the other, accepting grace, turned humbly to Him asking for forgiveness;
 and the merciful words of Jesus ignored life everlasting
 to this "poor thief." "This day thou shalt be with Me in

Paradise."

Since to such sweet Kingdom comest,
 Remember me poor thief of song.

Here in the poem "Assumpta Maria" an analogy is drawn

1) Ibid., p. 231.

2) St. Luke, XIII, 43.

3) Connolly, op. cit., p. 189.

between the poor thief on the Cross, who asked Our Lord's forgiveness, and Francis Thompson, who considers himself a "poor thief of song" and asks forgiveness for his poetry.

Christ descends to the level of man dying on the Cross and performs many acts of mercy toward man. Yet, as God He raised man to a higher level by His gift of grace.⁴ "But God (Who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together in Christ (by Whose grace we are saved) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus."⁵

His shoulder did I hold
Too high that I, o'erbold
Weak one,
But He little hath
Declined His stately path
And my
Feet set more high:

That the slack arm reach
His shoulder, and fain speech
Stir
His unwithering hair
And bolder not and bolder
I lean upon that shoulder
So dear
He is and near.⁶

Again Thompson refers to the cross as the image of suffering in "After Strain." He views the sorrows and sufferings of his own life, particularly that of his gift of poetry. In order to fulfill the ideal of the poet he must overcome the cross, that is the many obstacles and

4) Ibid., p. 471.

5) St. Paul, Epistle to the Ephesians, II, 4-6.

6) Connolly, op. cit., p. 180.

between the poor thief on the Cross, who asked Our Lord's forgiveness, and Francis Thompson, who considers himself a "poor thief of song" and asks forgiveness for his poetry.

Christ demands to the level of man dying on the Cross and performs many acts of mercy toward man. Yet, as God He raised man to a higher level by His gift of grace. "But God (who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace we are saved) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus."

His shoulder did I hold
Too high that I could hold
Weak one,
But He lifted me
Declined His steady path
And my
Feet set more high:

That the slack and rash
His shoulder, and rain speech
Still
His unflinching hair
And bolder not and bolder
I lean upon that shoulder
So dear
He is and near.

Again Thompson refers to the cross as the image of suffering in "Afterglow." He views the sorrows and sufferings of his own life, particularly that of his gift of poetry. In order to fulfill the ideal of the poet he must overcome the cross, that is the many obstacles and

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(5) St. Paul, Epistle to the Ephesians, II, 4-6.

(6) Connolly, op. cit., p. 180.

sufferings that must be endured for his art.

Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory.

Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields;
Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,

Here thy dread symbol only shadows yields.
of reaped joys thou art the heavy sheaf

Which must be lifted, though the reaper
groan

Yes, we may cry till Heaven's great ear be deaf,
But we must bear thee, and must bear alone.⁷

The imagery of the passion of Our Lord is pictured forth again wherein Thompson likens a soul who is unfaithful to Christ, by abusing His grace and acting contrary to Christian perfection, to Judas who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

But woe to him that takes the immortal kiss,
And not estates her in his housing life,
Mother of all his seed! So he betrays,
Not truth, the unbetrayable, but himself:
And with his kiss's rated traitor-craft
The Hæceldama of plot of days
He buys, to consummate his Judasry
Therein with Judas' guerdon of despair.⁸

On Golgotha there was placed on the head of Christ a crown of thorns which intensified the physical suffering and impressed more deeply on Him the great mental anguish of sorrow and pain which He endured at the sight of so many unfaithful souls who would not heed the tremendous sacrifice of the Son of God. The imagery drawn in these lines from the "Mistress of Vision" suggests the crown of thorns presented to Christ and the intensity of pain that

⁷Ibid., p. 133.

⁸Ibid., p. 89.

⁹Ibid., p. 154.

...and the ... for his ...

Even so, ... the victory.
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The ... of ... is ...
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we are adding to His sufferings by our many sins and coldness.

On Golgotha there grew a thorn
Round the long-prefigured Brows
Mourn, O mourn!

For the vine have we the spine?
Is this all the heavens allow?⁹

The spear that pierced the heart of Christ brought forth a gush of blood and water from the side of Christ.¹⁰ The analogy drawn here is between the spear that pierced Christ and the spear that we receive in the difficulties and trials that are presented to us in life which we should embrace with love. Thus by love all the thorns of life's sufferings and pain are transformed into joy.¹¹

On Calvary was shook a spear;
Press the point into thy heart--
Joy and fear!

All the spines upon the thorn into curling
tendrils start.¹²

Thompson's personality tended to be pessimistic and gloomy like the "ensepultred cold" rather than joyous and happy like the "resurrection feast" of Easter.¹³ He makes this a subject of his poetry in the "Night of Forebeing" when he likens himself to the tomb rather than the glories of the risen Christ.

In this delighted season, flaming
For thy resurrection-feast,
Ah, more I think the long enxepulture cold,
Then stony winter rolled
From the unsealed mouth of the holy East.¹⁴

⁹Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁰St. John, XIX' 34.

¹¹St. John, XVI' 20.

¹²Connolly, op. cit., p. 154.

¹³Wright, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁴Connolly, op. cit., p. 179.

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On Golgotha there grew a thorn
Round the long-fragranced brow
Mourn, O mourn!
For the vine have we the spine?
Is this all the heavens allow?

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and the spear that we receive in the difficulties and trials
that are presented to us in life which we should embrace
with love. Thus by love all the thorns of life's sufferings
and pain are transformed into joy.¹¹

On Calvary was shrouded a spear;
Press the point into thy heart—
Joy and last!
All the thorns upon the thorn into curling
Cordons start.¹²

Thompson's personality tended to be pessimistic and
gloomy like the "unhappy cold" rather than joyous and
happy like the "resurrection feast" of Easter.¹³ He makes
this a subject of his poetry in the "Night of Woe" when he
likens himself to the tomb rather than the glories

of the risen Christ.

In this delighted season, flaming
For thy resurrection-feast,
Ah, more I think the long unrequited cold,
Then story winter told
From the unsealed mouth of the holy East.¹⁴

- 10 Ibid., p. 154.
11 St. John, XII, 34.
12 St. John, XVI, 20.
13 Connolly, op. cit., p. 154.
14 Night, op. cit., p. 41.
15 Connolly, op. cit., p. 179.

The sun in its repeated setting and rising is a type of Christ's death and resurrection and His ascension. He set on earth and arose in heaven.

Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
 Upon thy Western rood;
 And His stained brow did veil like thine to night
 Yet lift once more Its light,
 And risen, again departed from our fall,
 But when It set on earth arose in Heaven,
 Thus hath He unto death His beauty given:¹⁵

In the "Passion of Mary" the resurrection feast is again the subject of imagery. Here he likens the resurrection of Christ with Mary, who resurrected from earth to heaven.

The angel death from his cold tomb
 Of life didst roll the stone away;
 And He thou barest in thy womb
 Caught thee at last unto the day,
 Before the living throne of Whom
 The Lights of Heaven burning pray.¹⁶

From the "Ode to the Setting Sun" the imagery of the Cross is again brought forth.

For worship it is too incredulous
 For doubt -- oh, too believing-passionate!
 What wild divinity makes my heart thus
 A fount of most baptismal tears -- Thy
 straight
 Long beams lie steady on the Cross. Ah me!
 What secret would thy radiant finger show?
 Of thy bright mastership is this the key?¹⁷

He does not believe that the sun is Christ but the sun is an image of Jesus Christ as God and Man. As man in the last stages of life, reacts to something on earth even

15) Ibid., pp. 88-89

16) Ibid., pp. 112-113.

17) Ibid., pp. 83.

The sun in its repeated setting and rising is a type
of Christ's death and resurrection and His ascension. He
set on earth and arose in heaven.

Like Him thou hast set in a mortal body of blood
Upon thy Western road;
And His stained brow did tell like thine to night
Yet life once more its light
And risen, again departed from our fall;
But when it set on earth arose in heaven,
Thus hath he unto death his beauty given.

In the "Passion of Mary" the resurrection feast is again
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Christ with Mary, who resurrected from earth to heaven.

The angel death from his cold tomb
Of life didst tell the same way;
And he thou barest in thy womb
Till thou didst set him into the day,
Before the living throne of whom
The light of heaven burning pray.

From the "Ode to the setting sun" the imagery of the
cross is again brought forth.

For worship it is too inordinant
For doubt -- oh, too believing-passionate!
What wild divinity takes my heart thus
A fount of most baptismal tears -- Thy
sacred
Long seems life steady on the cross. Oh me!
What secret would thy radiant finger show?
Of thy bright mastery is this the key?

He does not believe that the sun is Christ but the
sun is an image of Jesus Christ as God and Man. As man in
the last stages of life, ready to surrender on earth even

- 15) Ibid., pp. 88-89
- 16) Ibid., pp. 112-113
- 17) Ibid., pp. 83

though his tongue may not be loosed, so also the sun seems to react as it sets and points toward the Cross -- a symbol of hope and the meaning of life.

From the fall precipitant
These dim snatches of her chant
Only have remained mine; --
That from spear and thorn alone
May be grown
For the front of saint or singer any divinizing twine.¹⁸

For the spear and thorn are images of suffering and pain borne in the spirit of Christ.

The mysteries of the death and resurrection of Christ provide metaphor for the suffering on earth and ultimate happiness that is to be achieved in eternity. He places the greatest emphasis on the suffering he must endure for his art but he realizes that his poetry will live on long after his death.

18) Ibid., pp. 154-155.

though his tongue may not be loosed, so also the sun seems
to rest as it sets and points toward the Cross -- a symbol
of hope and the meaning of life.

From the Fall precipitant
These dim shadows of her hand
Only have remained mine; --
That from spear and thorn alone
May be grown

For the front of pain or anger any dividing twine.¹⁸

For the spear and thorn are images of suffering and

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Part Three

In this section the investigator is concerned with the images used by Thompson which refer to

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Holy Eucharist
4. Penance

Man, who is beset by uncertainties, changes not knowing which way to turn, needs to know upon which path to direct his steps so that he will not be deceived by the snares of Satan or the world. Christ has given to us the Sacraments, which when received produce grace and aid man on his journey from life to eternity. Fulton Sheen draws a picture wherein he shows the meaning of sacrament when compared to the universe.

The universe is a great sacrament. A sacrament in the strict sense of the term is a material sign used as a means of conferring grace, and instituted by Christ. In the broad sense of the term everything in the world is a sacrament inasmuch as it is a material thing used as a means of spiritual sanctification. Everything is and should be a stepping stone to God: sunsets should remind us of God's purity. Flowers, birds, beasts, men, women, children, beauty, love, truth, all these earthly possessions are not an end in themselves, they are only means to an end. The temporal world is a nursery to the eternal world, and the mansions of this earth a figure of the Father's heavenly mansions. The world is just a scaffolding up which souls climb to the kingdom of Heaven, and when the last soul shall have climbed through that scaffolding, then it shall be torn down and burnt with fervent fire, not because

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it is base, but simply because it has done its work.

Man therefore partly works out his salvation by sacramentalizing the universe: man sins by refusing to sacramentalize it, or, in other words, by using creatures as selfish ends rather than God-ward means. Sacramentalizing the universe ennoble the universe, for it bestows upon it a kind of transparency which permits the vision of the spiritual behind the material. Poets are masters in sacramentalizing creation for they never take anything in its mere material expression; for them things are symbols of the divine.¹

Thompson understood thoroughly the meaning of sacramentalizing the universe, and he gives profound beauty and thought to his poetry by using the Sacraments as images.

With strange affright
Sin knew the bitter first baptismal font.²

In the poem "Laus Amara Doloris," Thompson refers to the new Adam and Eve. He is picturing forth through the imagery of the Sacrament of Baptism the repentance they had for their sins of disobedience committed in the Garden of Paradise. They shed many tears of sorrow and remorse. Just as original sin removed by Baptism makes the soul pleasing to God, Adam and Eve's Baptism was the bitter tears of guilt that they had shed for their unfaithfulness.

Again he takes imagery from the Sacrament of Baptism.

What wild divinity makes my heart thus
fount of most baptismal tears?³

1) Fulton J. Sheen, The Life of All Living, D. Appleton Century Co., New York, 1929, pp. 214-216.

2) Connolly, op. cit., p. 230.

3) Ibid., p. 82.

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mentalizing the universe, and he gives profound beauty and thought to his poetry by using the sacraments as images.

With strange effluence
Sins knew the bitter first baptismal fount.²

In the poem "I have Amara Doloris," Thompson refers to the new Adam and Eve. He is picturing forth through the imagery of the Sacrament of Baptism the repentance they had for their sins of disobedience committed in the Garden of Paradise. They shed many tears of sorrow and remorse. Just as original sin removed by Baptism makes the soul pleasing to God, Adam and Eve's Baptism was the bitter tears of guilt that they had shed for their unfaithfulness. Again he takes imagery from the Sacrament of Baptism.

What wild divinity makes my heart thus
Fount of most baptismal tears?

1) Evelyn J. Green, The Life of Willing D. Appleton, Century Co., New York, 1929, pp. 214-215.

2) Connolly, op. cit., p. 230.

3) Ibid., p. 82.

Tears that purify the soul are tears that spring from blameless sorrow; they are a figurative baptism.

Confirmation is a sacrament wherein the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles and imparted to them the gift of tongues. In the Sacrament of Confirmation the Holy Ghost comes to the receiver and imparts to him grace which confirms the soul in strength to suffer all, even death, for the truth. Here the likeness is drawn between pain and suffering which transforms a girl into a woman just as the gifts of the Holy Ghost transformed the Apostles into men of singular strength morally and intellectually.

Yea, on the brow of mother and of wife
Descends thy confirmation from above
A pentecostal flame, love's holy hands
Consecrated
Not sacramental is, but through thy heaven.⁴

Again he uses the image of Confirmation

Nay to vicegerence o'er the wide confined
And mutinous principate of man's restless mind
With thine anointing oils the singer is designed:
To that most desolate station
Thine is his deep and dolorous consecration
Oh, where thy chrism shall dry upon my brow,
By that authentic sign I know
The sway is parted from this tenuous hand:⁵

Thompson borrows the imagery from the liturgy of the Church in the Sacrament of Penance. In this Sacrament is forgiven all sin when a penitent with humility and sorrow

3) Ibid. p. 82.

4) Ibid. pp. 229-230.

5) Ibid. p. 229.

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and suffering which transforms a girl into a woman just
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Yes, on the brow of mother and of wife
Descends thy confirmation from above
A pentecostal flame, love's holy hands
Consecrated
Not sacramental is, but through thy heaven.

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May we veneration o'er the wide confined
And mystic precincts of man's restless mind
With thine anointing oils the singer is designed:
To that most desolate station
Thine is his deep and dolorous consecration
Oh, where thy chrism shall dry upon my brow,
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- 3) Ibid. p. 82.
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- 5) Ibid. p. 229.

confesses his sins to the priest. This Sacrament was instituted when Our Lord turned to his disciples and said, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain they are retained."⁶ Here Thompson is comparing the beautiful virtue of virginity which when directed to God becomes one of the greatest in the sight of God; for "These shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."⁷ This virtue is likened to the purity of the soul of a penitent who has just been absolved from his sins.

And with confession never done
Admit the sacerdotal sun
Absolved eternally
By his asperging eye⁸

But thou, sweet Lady Chastity
Thou and thy brother love with thee--
Out of the terror of the tomb
And unclean shapes that haunt sleep's gloom
Yet, yet I call on thee.
"Abandon thou me"⁹

The "Orient Ode" provides imagery again and this time from the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist when at the Consecration of the Mass, the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This Sacrament was instituted by Our Lord on Holy Thursday night when with His twelve He took Bread, blessed it, gave it to His disciples and said, "This is My Body," and taking wine, blessed it, and said,

7) St. John, Apocalypse, XIV, 4.

8) Connolly, Ibid. p. 192.

9) Ibid. p. 194.

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And with confession never done
 Alike the accidental man
 Absolved eternally
 By his asperging eyes
 But thou, sweet Lady Chastity
 Thou and thy brother love with thee--
 One of the terror of the tomb
 And unloosen shapely that haunt sleep's gloom
 Yet, yet I call on thee.
 "Alas, thou art dead"

The "Glorious One" provides imagery again and this time from the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist when at the consecration of the Mass, the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This Sacrament was instituted by Our Lord on Holy Thursday night when with His twelve He took Bread, blessed it, gave it to His disciples and said, "This is My Body," and taking wine, blessed it, and said,

- 7) St. John, Apocalypsis, XIV, 4.
- 8) Connolly, Ibid., p. 192.
- 9) Ibid., p. 194.

"This is My Blood. Do this for a commemoration of Me."¹⁰

The heavens renew their innocence
And morning state
But by thy sacrament communicate.¹¹

Each day in the order of nature morning arrives anew and is born and with it innocence; just as by the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist received each day, the soul is renewed in innocence.

Again he compares the residing of the Holy Eucharist in the soul to a tabernacle.

Thy proper blood dost thou not give
That Earth, the gust Maenad, drink and dance:
Art thou not life of them that live?
Yea, in glad twinkling advent thou dost dwell
Within our body as a tabernacle!
Thou bittest with thine ordinance
The jaws of Time, and thou dost mete
The unsustainable treading of his feet.
Thou to thy spousal universe
Art Husband, she thy Wife and Church.¹²

The Sacraments provide symbols for the virtues which they represent. The Sacrament of Baptism symbolizing innocence and purity is his favorite and it provides the greatest number of images. The other virtues which the Sacraments symbolize are courage, strength, truth and repentance. The world to Thompson is one great Sacrament manifesting the attributes of God through the natural order.

10) St. Luke, XXII, 19.

11) Connolly, op. cit., p. 168

12) Ibid., pp. 165-166

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12) Ibid., pp. 165-166

CHAPTER III

IMAGES OF NATURE

Nature, God's manifestation to man, was a source of poetic inspiration to Francis Thompson. Although many poets have used nature as the theme and subject of poetry there have been few in the nineteenth century who have looked steadily at nature and derived from it the symbolism and thought that inspired Thompson. Wordsworth worshipped nature so much that he identified nature and God, falling into the error of Pantheism; Shelley found in nature material beauty which became the subject of many delightful poems but the only satisfaction he found was natural beauty; Keats found in nature a sensuous beauty in which he delighted. Francis Thompson used nature as a stepping-stone to the Creator of all beauty, Who is not nature but Who is the author of nature. Hence, his nature poetry is always symbolic of the Divine to Whom his songs are directed.

It is not surprising then to find that much of his imagery is taken from nature since Thompson was so essentially a thinker who saw the whole of life in its aspects from a supernatural view. He loved nature and delighted to see in it the hands of the Creator.

The nature images are divided in the following manner.

1) Connolly, op. cit., p. 78.

CHAPTER III IMAGES OF NATURE

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The nature images are divided in the following manner.

IMAGES OF NATURE

A. Aspects of the Sky

Sun
Moon
Stars
Winds

B. Aspects of the Earth

Flowers
Trees
Grass
Animals

C. Aspects of the Water

Ocean
Fountain

D. Aspects of the Seasons

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

Images drawn from the sky and the earth are almost equally distributed. They outnumber those of water and seasons. In general, they are conventional, specific, and appealing.

The greater number of images drawn from the aspects of the sky are evidences of Thompson's love of natural beauty and the reflection of the Divine. Yet, Thompson in one sweeping image includes all of nature in "The Hound of Heaven."

Come then, ye other children, Nature's -- share
With me (said I) your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip.¹

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A. Aspects of the Sky

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of the sky are evidences of Thompson's love of natural beauty and the reflection of the Divine. Yet, Thompson in one sweeping image includes all of nature in "The

Round of Heaven."

Come then, ye other children, Nature's -- share
With me (said I) your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip.

Let me twine with you caresses,
 Wantoning
 With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
 Banqueting
 With her in her wind-walled palace,
 Underneath her azured dais
 Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
 From a chalice
 Lucent sweeping out of the dayspring. ²

Nature is decked out in a human form and is made the queen and mother seated on her throne in the palace -- earth which is surrounded with winds, and over head, the azure sky makes the covering of the magnificent structure. Inside the palace, Nature, who is queen and mother, is surrounded by her children -- flowers, trees, clouds, rain, and plants, and they are banqueting and drinking from chalices with the light of day overflowing by the sun at daybreak.

The sun has always been a symbol of Christ -- the true Sun rising in the East -- who nourishes all living things. Here the imagery is between Christ and the Sun. What profit it if the sun performs its duties of nourishing the earth, if the true Sun, Christ, does not make His "cloud of thee", that is His own?

What profit if the sun
 Put forth his radiant thews
 And on his circuit run,
 Even after my device, to this and to that use;
 And the true Orient, Christ,
 Make not His cloud of thee? ³

2) Ibid., p. 78.

3) Ibid., pp. 198-199.

Let me twine with you tresses,
 Wandering
 With our Lady-Mother's vestment tresses,
 Bending
 With her in her wind-walled palace,
 Underneath her seated dais
 Greeting, as your careless way is,
 From a chalice
 Lucent sweeping out of the daydawn.

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 What profit is it the sun performs its duties of nourish-
 ing the earth, if the true Sun, Christ, does not make
 His "cloud of glory", that is His own?

What profit is the sun
 But forth his radiant throws
 And on his circuit runs,
 Even after my device, to this end to that use;
 And the true Christ, Christ,
 Make not His cloud of glory?

2) Ibid., p. 78.

3) Ibid., pp. 198-199.

Again he uses the imagery of the sky and in particular the sun in the "Sister Song":

Ere eve has struck and furled
The beamy-textured tent transpicious
Of webbed coerule wrought and woven calms,
Whence has paced forth the lambent-footed sun.⁴

To understand and interpret this poem, the imagery of the symbolism must be grasped. Evening means the end of life; tent refers to the sky and here refers to life; coerule sky is a clear sky; webbed clouds are difficulties in life; sun here means the soul, thus he uses heavenly bodies to express death.

While the sun of song sits in the poet's soul, he sees the Cross of suffering standing between him and the bright sky of poetic success. It signifies the pain he must endure for his work and his acceptance of it with Christian resignation

Now with one ray that other sun of Song
Sets in the bleeding waters of my soul,
One step and lo! the Cross stands gaunt and long
'Twixt me and yet bright skies, a presaged
dole.⁵

Loneliness was the unhappy lot of Thompson, who could sing such beautiful and meaningful songs for companionship to others. It was because of his own personality and his excessive shyness that he endured that aloneness. Here he draws an analogy between himself who is always alone and the rose who has the wind as a lover.

The wind hath the rose

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 89.

Again he uses the imagery of the sky and in particular

the sun in the "Slaver Song":

Heave has struck and tarried
The heavy-voiced tent translucent
Of webbed cocoon and woven calms,
Whence has passed forth the lambent-footed sun.

To understand and interpret this poem, the imagery of the

symbolism must be grasped. Evening means the end of life;
tent refers to the sky and here refers to life; cocoon sky
is a clear sky; webbed clouds are diffused in life; sun
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While the sun of song sits in the poet's soul, he sees
the cross of suffering standing between him and the bright
sky of poetic success. It signifies the pain he must endure
for his work and his acceptance of it with Christian resignation

Now with me thy last other sun of Song
Bats in the blessing waters of my soul,
One step and lo! the cross stands yoked and long
'Twixt me and yet bright skies, a presaged
dole.

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such beautiful and meaningful songs for companionship to
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draws an analogy between himself who is always alone and
the rose who has the wind as a lover.
The wind hath the rose

Albion, p. 20.
Albion, p. 89.

And the rose her kiss
 Ah! mouth of me!
 Is it then this
 Seems so much to cheer
 I wonder only
 The rose hath her kiss.

As the elf flower sickened and fainted in a thrill of ascent,
 the South wind, her lover caught the spirit to his arms
 as he went. The storm of the West and the North sent forth
 a cold and gusty wind and he (the elf flower's lover) fled.
 The imagery here is present in the wind.

Now the elf of the flowers had sickened in her
 power
 And fainted in a thrill of ascent;
 But her lover of the South, with a moan upon
 his mouth
 Caught her spirit to his arms as he went;
 There the storm of the West and North
 Sent a great vowing forth,
 Sent a skirling desolation and he went.

God took a fit of Paradise-wind
 A slip of coquettish weather,
 A thought as simple as himself,
 And revealed them together.
 Unto His eyes He held it there,
 To teach it waking dreams
 With memory of what, perished.

The imagery expressed in this poem is a natural phenomena
 (wind) used to represent creation by God. Creation is
 the making of something from nothing and the "wind" seemed
 to Thompson the most appropriate symbol for this thought.
 In "After Britain" he uses the moon and stars to symbolize

8) Ibid. p. 288.

7) Ibid. p. 186.

8) Ibid. p. 277.

hope and resignation in death.

No: while soul, sky, and music bleed together,
Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
Prove them the brood of immortality.

My soul is quitted of death-neighbouring swoon,
Who shall not slake her immitigable scars
Until she hear 'My sister!' from the moon,
And take the kindred kisses of the stars.⁹

Here Thompson draws imagery from the moon again where-
in he likens the reflection of the light of the moon to
the Blessed Virgin who reflects the light of God. The sun
derived stole encircled her body. Her body was heavenly
because of the fullness of grace and human because she
was a human being.

There was never a moon
Save the white sufficing woman;
Light most heavenly-human--
Like the unseen form of sound
Sensed invisibly in time--
With a sun-derived stole
Did inaureole
All her lovely body sound,
Loveliely her lucid body with that light was
interstrewn.¹⁰

The moon is a symbol of Eve after the fall. Here the
poet tells the sun not to look on the moon but on the
earth who is a symbol of Mary--more beautiful than the moon.

The moon, O leave, pale ruined Eve
Behold her fair and greater daughter
Offers to thee her fruitful water,
Which at thy first white Ave shall conceive¹¹

9) Ibid. p. 90.

10) Ibid. p. 277

11) Ibid. p. 152

hope and resignation in death.

No: while soul, sky, and music blend together,
Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
The restless winds and stirrings of whose leader
Prove them the proof of immortality.

My soul is quiver of death-neighbouring swan,
Who shall not make her imitable scars
Until she hear 'My sister!' from the moon,
And take the blessed kisses of the stars.

Here Thompson draws imagery from the moon again where-
in he likens the reflection of the light of the moon to
the Blessed Virgin who reflects the light of God. The sun
derived also encircled her body. Her body was heavenly
because of the fullness of grace and human because she
was a human being.

There was never a moon
Have the white smiling woman;
Light most heavenly-human--
Like the massed form of sound
Sensed invisibly in time--
With a sun-derived stole
Did immortal
All her lovely body sound,
Lovely her lucid body with that light was
Incertainty.¹⁰

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The moon, O leave, pale ruined Eve
Behold her fair and greater daughter
Others to thee her fruitful water,
Which at thy first white Ave shall conceive.¹¹

- 9) Ibid. p. 90.
10) Ibid. p. 277
11) Ibid. p. 152

He hymns the moon's uprising

The vapour at the feet of her,
And a haze about her tinged in fainter wise;
As if she had trodden the stars in press,
Till the gold wine spurted over her dress,
Till the gold wine gushed out round her feet;¹²

The poppy, symbol of the poet and his spiritual ideals,
and wheat, symbol of man and his material achievements,
are particularly appropriate figures. Thompson knew that
even though his life materially was misery and poverty,
yet his ideals and songs were exalted and heavenward.
After his death there will remain the golden flower of his
song but his misery will be forgotten

Love, love! your flower of withered dream
In leaved rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time. ¹³

The daffodils in the springtime make beautiful imagery.
As the daffodils and wheat in the Springtime begin their
life under the earth, so the poet feels the first premoni-
tion of death within himself of the worm that will one day
destroy him.

As sap foretastes the spring
As earth ere blossoming thrills
With far daffodils

And feels her breast turn sweet
With unconceived wheat;
So doth
My death foreloathe

12) Ibid. p. 100.

13) Ibid. p. 9.

He hymns the moon's uprising

The vapour at the feet of her,
And a haze about her ringed in fainter wise;
As if she had trodden the stars in grass,
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In leaved rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Embellished and snug in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper's hand, and his reaper time. 13

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As the daffodils and wheat in the springtime begin their
life under the earth, so the poet feels the first premoni-
tion of death within himself of the worm that will one day
destroy him.

As sap forestastes the spring
As earth ere blossoming thrills
With her daffodils
And feels her breast turn sweet
With unaccounted wheat;
So soon
My death forestastes

12) Ibid. p. 100.

13) Ibid. p. 9.

The abhorred spring Dis
 With seething presciences
 Affirm
 The preparate worm. 14

Who made the splendid rose
 Saturate with purple glows;
 Cupped to the marge with beauty; a perfume-press
 Whence the wind vintages
 Gushes of warmed fragrance richer far
 Than all the flavorful ooze of Cyprus' vats?
 Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,
 With dusky cheeks burnt red
 She sways her heavy head,
 Drunk with the must of her own odorousness;
 While in a moted trouble the vexed gnats
 Maze, and vibrate, and tease the noontide hush. 15

He found in external nature a treasure house of imagery
 in the poppy.

O frankly fickle, and fickle true!
 For my brief life-while I take from you
 This token, fair and fit, meseems
 For me -- this withering flower of dreams.

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
 Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:
 The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
 The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needles head,
 And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:
 The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
 Time shall reap, but after the reaper
 The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper. 16

She is "nature's solitary boast," the Mother of God
 whose beauty is stainless. Thompson addresses much of his
 poetry to her and the imagery in the "Proemion of the
 Sister Songs" is taken from the rose. She the stem and
 He the rose -- she brings prayers to God the Father just

14) Ibid., p. 93.

15) Ibid., p. 86.

16) Ibid., p. 9.

The absorbed spring life
 With meaning prepossessing
 Little
 The progress worn. 14

Who made the splendid rose
 Saturated with purple glow;
 Gipped to the edge with beauty; a perfume-press
 Whence the wind vintages
 Gushes of warmer fragrance richer far
 Than all the liverious oases of Cyprus; yet
 So, in you falls which waves her green cypher,
 With dusky cheeks paint red
 She sways her heavy head,
 Drunk with the mass of her own odorlessness;
 While in a muted croule the vexed
 Mass, and vibrates, and ceases the possible hush. 15

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 The sleep-flower aways in the wheat its head,
 Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:
 The goodly grain and the sun-baked sleeper
 The reaper reaps, and time the reaper.
 I hang 'mid men my needless head,
 And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:
 The goodly man and the sun-baked sleeper
 Time shall reap, but after the reaper
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 He the rose -- she brings prayers to God the Father just

- 14) Ibid., p. 93.
- 15) Ibid., p. 86.
- 16) Ibid., p. 9.

as the rose buds from the stem.

Now, therefore, thou who bring'st the year to birth
Who guard'st the base and dabbled feet of Mary
Sweet stem to that rose Christ, who from the earth
Suck'st our poor prayers, conveying them to Him;¹⁷

Thompson had to endure much pain both physically and mentally and it is the fruit of this that has brought forth much of his songs. Here Thompson uses flowers to symbolize pain.

But here Mary wreathed a rainless wreath
In the new-sucked milk of the sun's bosom
Is dabbled the mouth of the daisy blossom;
The smouldering rosebud chars through the skieth.¹⁸

The lily of sinlessness, washed in Mary's tears, retains the whiteness. The blossoms of poetic success and good deeds bloom in time of prayer to Mary and always remain colorful, because the blood of her help and inspiration flow in their veins. The roses of that love bloom in time of prayer to Mary and glow with greatest warmth and vigor because they have been dipt in her pure heart. The "Mistress of Vision" shows this imagery.

The lily kept its gleaming,
In her tears (divine conservers!)
Washed with sad art;
And the flowers of dreaming
Paled not their fervours,
For her blood flowed through their nervures
And the roses were most red, for she dipt them
in her heart.¹⁹

As the magician raises the ghost of the rose from its ashes, so when Mary's voice splashed into the waters of his

¹⁷Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 152

heart, it made answer and flashed red with love.

And as a necromancer
 Raises from the rose-ash
 The ghost of the rose
 My heart so made answer
 To her voice's silver splash, --
 Stirred in reddening flash,
 And from out its mortal ruins the purpureal
 phantom blows.²⁰

The poet again uses imagery in analogy. In "Field Flower", Thompson describes the creation of God and the creation of man and then compares them.

Beside the flower he held his ways,
 And leaned him to it gaze for gaze --
 He took its meaning, gaze for gaze,
 As baby looks on baby;
 Its meaning passed into his gaze,
 Native as meaning may be;
 He rose with all his shining gaze
 As children's eyes at play be.²¹

If God cares for the blade of grass how much more does He care for man and how much more does He use his energies in caring for both man's spiritual and temporal welfare. He shows God's wisdom in one blade of grass.

One grass blade in its veins
 Wisdom's whole flood contains
 O little blade now vaunt
 Thee, and be arrogant
 Tell the proud sun that he
 Sweated in shaping thee.²²

The yew tree is a symbol of man's life; that tree which withstood all the hardship of the elements, that tree which housed the birds in its branches. Does it cease when fallen dead after centuries? In its symbolism

20) Ibid., pp. 156-157.

21) Ibid., p. 278.

22) Ibid., p. 291.

heart, it made answer and finished red with love.

And as a postmaster
Raises from the rose-ash
The ghost of the rose
My heart so made answer
To her voice's silver glass,
Shivered in reddening flash,
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tree which housed the birds in its branches. Does it
cease when fallen dead after centuries? In its symbolism

20) Ibid., pp. 156-157.
21) Ibid., p. 278.
22) Ibid., p. 281.

he is attempting to show that man will reap the benefits of his life on earth.

Yet, they within its very heart so crept,
Reached not the heart that courage kept
With winds and years beswept.

And in its boughs did close and kindly nest
The birds, as they within its breast,
By all its leaves caressed.

But bird nor child might touch by any art
Each other's or the tree's hid heart,
A whole God's breadth apart;²³

Here the poet uses the cypress tree to represent mourning and sorrow.

Of all the trees thou lovest so,
None with thee to grave shall go,
Save the abhorred cypress tree.
The abhorred?--Ah, I know, I know,
Thy dearest follower it would be.²⁴

Again he takes imagery from the trees and this time it is the laurel tree.

But above thy English grave
Who knows if a tree shall wave?
Save--when the far certainty
Of thy fame fulfilled is--save
The laurel that shall spring from thee.

Very little carest thou
If the world no laurel-bough
Set in thy dead hand, ah me!
But my heart to grieve allow
For the fame thou shalt not see!²⁵

The laurel tree represents to Thompson his gift of poetry for he was not unaware of this gift.

²³Ibid. p. 119.

²⁴Ibid. p. 55.

²⁵Ibid. p. 55.

he is attempting to show that man will reap the benefits of
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Yet, they wish the very heart to cease,
Heard not the heart that courage kept
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And in its bosom did close and kindly nest
The bird, as they wish the heart
By all its leaves caressed.

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If all the trees thou lovedst so,
None with thee to grave shall go,
Save the cypress tree.
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Thy distant follower I would be.

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the laurel tree.

Not above thy English grave
Who knows if a tree shall wave
Gave--when the far certainty
Of thy name fulfilled is--gave
The laurel that shall spring from thee.

Very little more than
If the world no laurel-bough
Set in thy hand, as now
But my heart to give allow
For the time thou shalt not see;

The laurel tree represents to Thompson his gift of poetry
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2101d. p. 110.
2101d. p. 55.
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Thompson compares natural phenomena with eternity to understand supernatural life; for the falling acorn buds its tree and the falling rain that bares the greenery just as death will begin a new life in eternity.

It is the falling acorn that buds the tree,
It is the falling rain that bares the greenery,
The fern plants moulder when the ferns arise
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.²⁶

There are numerous examples of animals, birds and insects images that Thompson employs merely as one who has a superficial knowledge of them but who has an acute realization of their usefulness in poetry. His best known image is from "The Hound of Heaven" where the daring of the poet is manifest in calling God a hound in pursuit of the soul.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind.²⁷

The height of his greatness is reached in the experiences of one who is running forever trying to escape the realities of life in a mad endeavor to substitute other things in their place. Thus the wild chase begins. The idea of the poem is probably summed up by St. Augustine, "Thou wast driving me on with thy goad so that I could not be at rest until Thou wast manifest to the eye of my soul."

Thompson is trying to find the answer to life. He looks about seeking, attempting one thing and then another but all in vain. He cannot escape the hound. As fast as he flies from

²⁶Ibid. p. 89.
²⁷Ibid. p. 77.

Thompson compares natural phenomena with eternity to understand supernatural life; for the falling score buds the tree and the falling rain that bears the greenery just as death will begin a new life in eternity.

It is the falling score that buds the tree,
It is the falling rain that bears the greenery,
The fern plants moult when the ferns arise,
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.²⁵

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I lied Him down the night and down the days;
I lied Him down the arches of the years;
I lied Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind.²⁶

The height of his greatness is reached in the experiences of one who is running forever trying to escape the realities of life in a mad endeavor to substitute other things in their place. Thus the wild chase begins. The idea of the poem is probably summed up by St. Augustine, "There wast driving me on with thy good so that I could not be at rest until Thou wast manifest to the eye of my soul."

Thompson is trying to find the answer to life. He looks about seeking, attempting one thing and then another but all in vain. He cannot escape the hound. As fast as he flies from

one fleeting thing to another the hound is close at his heels
waiting to be caught--waiting for an acknowledgment of his
defeat.

Thus one image after another showing the substitutions
he has made for his escape picturing the flight of the soul.

I hid from him under running laughter

Across the margin of the world I fled
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars
Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars

Yet he found not happiness nor contentment there for--

Yet the days were long and the evenings longer,

I said to Dawn: Be sudden---to Eve: Be soon;

He sought his escape in children,

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies
They at least are for me, surely for me!

Yet he found not happiness nor contentment there for,

Their angel plucked them from me by the hair
Still searching for an answer to life he sought it in nature.

Come then, ye other children, Nature's---share
With me--

To nature he turned for satisfaction and pleasure

I in their delicate fellowship was one---
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.

I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,

And then his realization

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.

one fleeing thing to another the hour is close at his heels
 waiting to be caught--waiting for an acknowledgment of his
 defeat.

Thus one image after another showing the substitutions
 he has made for his escape picturing the flight of the soul.

I hid from him under running laughter

Across the margin of the world I fled
 And trod the gold gateways of the stars
 Smiling for shelter on their changed bars

Yet he found not happiness nor contentment there for--

Yet the days were long and the evenings longer,

I said to Dawn: Be sudden--to Ever: Be soon;

He sought his escape in children,

I sought no more that after which I strayed
 In face of man or maid
 But still within the little children's eyes
 Gazed something, something that replies
 They at least are for me, surely for me!

Yet he found not happiness nor contentment there for,

Their angel plucked them from me by the hair

Still searching for an answer to life he sought it in nature.

Come then, ye other children, Nature's---share
 With me--

To nature he turned for satisfaction and pleasure

I in their delicate fellowship was one---
 Drew the bolt of Nature's secretless.

I laughed in the morning's eyes,
 I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
 Heaven and I went together,

And then his realization

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's gray cheek.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
And still the hound is pursuing him closer,

A voice comes yet more fleet--
Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.

The climax of the chase is finally realized when the hare
is overcome.

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.

Then the love which God has for him is revealed.

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!

His answer to life he finds when Christ answers,

'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'²⁸

He sometimes merely suggests images as he does in
"Sister Songs" in his comparison of the sun to a dog.

From its red leash my heart strains tamelessly.²⁹

The significance of horses to represent speed are frequently
used.

While the winds in their tricksome courses
The snowy steeds vault upon
That are foaled of the white sea horses
And washed in the streams of the sun.³⁰

²⁸Ibid. p. 77. etc.

²⁹Ibid. p. 19.

³⁰Ibid. p. 137.

Nature, poor creature, cannot make my dream;
 And still the hood is pursuing his sister,
 A voice comes yet more fleet--
 Lo! hark! contents these, who content, at not Me.
 The climax of the chase is finally realized when the hare
 is overcome.
 Naked I wait Thy love's applied stroke!
 My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
 And left me to my knees;
 I am defenceless utterly.
 Then the love which God has for him is revealed.
 All which I took from thee I did but take,
 Not for my harm,
 But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
 All which thy child's mistake
 Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
 Rise, clasp my hand, and come!
 His answer to life he finds when Christ answers,
 "Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
 I am He whom thou seekest!"
 Then gravest love from those, who gravest love.
 He sometimes merely suggests images as he does in
 "Slater Ganga" in his comparison of the sun to a dog.
 From its red leash my heart strains vainly.
 The significance of horses to represent speed are frequently
 used.

While the winds in their tricksome courses
 The snowy steeds vault upon
 That are loaded of the white horses
 And washed in the streams of the sun.

28 Ibid. p. 77. etc.
 29 Ibid. p. 19.
 30 Ibid. p. 137.

Again he uses only the suggestion of a horse.

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.³¹

Animals suggesting ferociousness and wildness appear less frequently.

Thou as a lion roar'st, O Sun,
Upon thy satellites' vexed heels:³²

He has many symbols for the wind but this comparison with a leopard is most unusual.

We see the wind, like a light swift leopard.³³

The evening hours are compared to a panther.

And we shake on the sky a dusted fire
From the ripped sunset's anther
While the flecked main, drowsing in gorged desire,
Purrs like an outstretched panther.³⁴

Night is compared to a "Swart boar"

Too soon fails the light, and the swart boar, night
Gores to death the bleeding day.³⁵

The variety of bird images taken from a wide expanse of emotions show Thompson's delight in the freedom of the bird.

Over life's bended brows prevail
With laughters of the insolent nightingale
Jocund of heart in darkness.³⁶

In "Orison-Tyst" he uses the comparison of a prayer to God with the carrier dove:

She told me in the morning her white thought

³¹Ibid. p. 78.

³²Ibid. p. 165.

³³Ibid. p. 136.

³⁴Ibid. p. 135.

³⁵Ibid. p. 117.

³⁶Ibid. p. 258.

Again he uses only the suggestion of a horse.

To all swift things for swiftness did I say:
Giving to the whirling mass of every wing.

Animals suggesting ferociousness and wildness appear

less frequently.

Then as a lion roars, O Sun,
Upon thy ascellae, vexed heels:

He has many symbols for the wind but this comparison

with a leopard is most unusual.

We see the wind, like a light swift leopard

The evening hours are compared to a panther.

And we shake on the way a dusted fire
From the rippled sunset's anchor
While the flaked mists, growing in gorges dense,
Part like an outstretched panther.

Night is compared to a "swart boat"

Too soon falls the light, and the swart boat, night
Goes to berth the blessing day.

The variety of bird images taken from a wide expanse of

emotions show Thompson's delight in the freedom of the bird.

Over life's banded brows prevail
With lanterns of the insistent night
Tinged of heart in darkness.

In "Orison-Tyger" he uses the comparison of a prayer

to God with the carrier dove:

She told me in the morning her white thought

31.10.18	p. 78.
32.10.18	p. 105.
33.10.18	p. 136.
34.10.18	p. 135.
35.10.18	p. 117.
36.10.18	p. 258.

Did beat Godward, like a carrier-dove
My name beneath its wing³⁷

He is bemoaning the fact that he is incapable of
speaking the thought that is in his mind.

Deep in my heart subsides the infrequent word,
And there dies slowly throbbing like a wounded bird³⁸

It is evident from the images of the aspect of the earth,
which have been quoted, that Thompson especially finds in
growing plants the bulk of his imagery. It is in the beauty of
natural growth that he finds a figure for the endless life
in eternity.

"To Saint Monica" is a portrait dedicated to her who
through much suffering and tears finally saw her son converted
to Christianity. Here Thompson uses the tremendous imagery
of floods to show the sorrow and agony of the Mother's tears
for a great sinner. He compares floods to the abundance of
tears that St. Monica shed for the conversion of St. Augustine.
Thompson asks that she teach us to grace our prayers with her
fervour.

The floods lift up, lift up their voice,
With a many-watered noise!
Down the centuries fall those sweet
Sobbing waters to our feet,
And our laden air still keeps
Murmur of a Saint that weeps.

Teach us but to grace our prayers
Such divinity of tears,³⁹

Earth should be lustrate again
With contrition of that rain:
Till celestial floods o're-rise
The high tops of Paradise.⁴⁰

³⁷Ibid. p. 131.

³⁸Ibid. p. 68.

³⁹Ibid. p. 289.

⁴⁰Ibid. p. 290.

My name beneath its wing
 Did beat Godward, like a carrier-dove

He is demanding the fact that he is incapable of

speaking the thought that is in his mind.

Deep in my heart abides the inexpressible word,
 And there dies slowly something like a wounded bird.³⁸

It is evident from the images of the aspect of the earth,

which have been quoted, that Thompson especially finds in

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natural growth that he finds a figure for the endless life

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Thompson asks that she teach us to grace our prayers with her

fervour.

The floods lift up, lift up their voices,

With a many-watered noise!

Down the centuries fall those sweet

Gobbling waters to our feet,

And our laden air still keeps

Murmur of a Saint that weeps.

Teach us not to grace our prayers

Such divinity of tears.³⁹

Earth should be hushed again

With contrition of that rain:

Till celestial floods o'er-rise

The high tops of Paradise.⁴⁰

38 Ibid. p. 131.
 39 Ibid. p. 68.
 40 Ibid. p. 289.
 41 Ibid. p. 290.

His heart is a broken fountain; his mind is a great tree
hangingover it and tears drip from it having formed a stagnant
pool within that heart.

And now my heart is a broken fount
Wherein the tear-drippings stagnate, spilt
down ever
From the dark thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.⁴¹

Life and life's beauty hold their revels only near the surface
of the abysmal ocean of life. There, like the phantasms of
a poet's mind, the exquisite marvels of the sea form a concert
of color as the sunlight mingles with their green and blue as
they sail along.

Life and life's beauty only hold their revels
In the abysmal ocean's luminous levels,
There, like the phantasms of a poet pale,
The exquisite marvels sail.
Clarified silver: greens and azures frail
As if the colours sighed themselves away,
And blent in supersubtile interplay
As if they swoomed into each other's arms;
Repured vermilion
Like ear-tops 'gainst the sun;⁴²

In return for the gifts that the sun renders the earth,
earth brings forth the sanctities of flowers and holy odours.

And so the love which is thy dower,
Earth, though her first-frightened breast
Against the exigent boon protest
(For she, poor maid, of her own power
Has nothing in herself, not even love,
But an unwitting void thereof),
Gives back to thee in sanctities of flower;
And holy odours do her bosom invest,
The sweeter grows for being prest.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid. P. 80.

⁴²Ibid. p. 31.

⁴³Ibid. p. 164.

His heart is a broken fountain; His mind is a great tree
 hanging over it and tears drip from it having formed a stagnant
 pool within that heart.

And now my heart is a broken fountain
 wherein the tear-dripping stagnates, and
 flows over
 from the dark channels that river
 Upon the slight branches of my mind.

Life and life's beauty hold their revels only near the surface
 of the abyssal ocean of life. There, like the phantoms of
 a poet's mind, the exquisite marvels of the sea form a concert
 of color as the sunlight mingles with their green and blue as
 they sail along.

Life and life's beauty only hold their revels
 in the abyssal ocean's limbo levels;
 There, like the phantoms of a poet's mind,
 The exquisite marvels sail.
 Clarified silver: green and azure trail
 As if the colors slight themselves away,
 And float in superstitious interplay
 As if they swarmed into each other's arms;
 Reputed verities
 Like ear-loops 'gainst the sea;

In return for the gifts that the sun renders the earth,
 earth brings forth the sanctities of flowers and holy odours.

And so the love which is thy power,
 which, though her first-fruits be pressed
 Against the altar soon pressed
 For me, poor soul, of her own power
 Has nothing in herself, not even love,
 But an awaiting void (necesse);
 Gives back to thee in sanctities of flower;
 And holy odours do her bosom invest;
 The sweeter grows for being pressed.

Alfred. p. 83.
 Ibid. p. 31.
 Ibid. p. 164.

Winter and spring provide a great variety of imagery for Thompson. The coldness and desolation of winter symbolizes the aridity of his life and the life and growth of spring gives him hope.

O earth, unchilded, widowed Earth, so long
 Lifting in patient pine and ivy-tree
 Mournful belief and steadfast prophecy
 Behold how all things are made true!
 Behold your bridegroom cometh in to you
 Exceeding glad and strong.
 Raise up your eyes, O raise your eyes abroad!
 No more shall you sit sole and vidual,
 Searching in servile pall,
 Upon the hieratic night the star-sealed
 sense of all.⁴⁴

Here he shows winter waiting for the spring:

Can you tell me where had hid her
 Pretty Maid July?
 I would swear one day ago
 She passed by,
 I would swear that I do know
 The blue bliss of her eye:
 "Tarry, maid, maid," I bid her;
 But she hastened by.
 Do you know where she has hid her,
 Maid July?⁴⁵

Personification is one of Thompson's master tools, as we see above in his likening of summer to an elusive maiden.

Thompson draws a magnificent image of the departure of summer, comparing it to the cage of a bird.

When the bird quits the cage
 We set the cage outside,
 With seed and with water,
 And the door wide,
 Haply we may win it so
 Back to abide.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 173.

⁴⁵Ibid. p. 275.

Winter and spring provide a great variety of imagery for
 Thompson. The coldness and desolation of winter symbolizes the
 aridity of his life and the life and growth of spring gives
 him hope.

O earth, unshaken, widowed earth, so long
 Lifting in patient pine and ivy-crests
 Mountain belief and steadfast prophesy
 Behind how all things are made true,
 Behind your wilderness connect in to you
 Excessing glad and strong.
 Raise up your eyes, O raise your eyes abroad!
 No more shall you sit sole and vivid,
 Searching in servile hall,
 Upon the historic night the star-sealed
 sense of all.

Here he shows winter waiting for the spring:

Can you tell me where had his her
 Pretty maid July?
 I would swear one day too
 She passed by.
 I would swear that I do know
 The blue glass of her eye:
 "Early, maid, early," I did hear:
 But she hastened by.
 Do you know where she has hid her,
 Maid July?

Personification is one of Thompson's master tools, as
 we see above in his likening of summer to an elusive maiden.
 Thompson draws a magnificent image of the departure of
 summer, comparing it to the cage of a bird.

When the bird quits the cage
 We set the cage outside,
 With seed and with water,
 And the door wide,
 Early we may win it so
 Back to abide.

Hang her cage of earth out
 O'er Heaven's sunward wall,
 Its four gates open, winds in watch
 By reined cars at all;
 Relume in hanging hedgerows
 The rain-quenched blossom;
 And roses sob out their tears out
 On the gale's warm heaving bosom;
 Shake the lilies till their scent
 Over-drip their rims;
 That our runaway may see
 We do know her whims:
 Sleek the tumbled waters out
 For her travelled limbs;
 Strew and smooth blue night thereon:
 There will--O doubt not her!
 The lovely sleepy lady lie,
 With all her stars about her!⁴⁶

Here is Thompson again dressing up nature as a woman.
 The rapidity of movement and the grace displayed show the
 potentialities of the poet.

The wonders of the earth are sweeping images in describing
 the personality of Thompson and yet, they too give apt images
 of himself as a poet: for he finds winter within himself in
 his soul and in his mind.

Shade within shade! for deeper in the glass
 Now other imaged meanings pass;
 And as the man, the poet there is read.
 Winter with me, alack!
 Winter on every hand I find:
 Soul, brain, and pulses dead,
 The mind no further by the warm sense fed,
 The soul weak-stirring in the arid mind,
 More tearless-weak to flash itself abroad
 Than the earth's life beneath the frost-scorched sod.
 My lips have drought, and crack,
 By laving music long unvisited.
 Beneath the austere and macerating rime
 Draws back constricted in its icy urns
 The genial flame of Earth, and there

⁴⁶Ibid. P. 277.

Have her cage of earth out
 O'er heaven's bannered wall,
 Let four gates open, white as snow,
 By which she may go;
 Let her in passing robes
 The rain-garment of sorrow;
 And roses and soft hair
 On the girl's warm heaving bosom;
 Shake the lilies of their scent
 Over her snowy limbs;
 That our pathway may see
 We do know her way;
 Bless the lilies that water out
 For her travelled limbs;
 Grow and among blue night
 There will be a flower not
 The lovely sleep life,
 With all her stars about her.

Here is Thompson again dressing up nature as a woman.
 The rapidity of movement and the grace displayed show the
 potentialities of the poet.
 The wonder of the earth are sweeping images in describing
 the personality of Thompson and yet, they too give up images
 of himself as a poet: for he finds winter within himself in
 his soul and in his mind.

Sheds within shades: for deeper in the glass
 Now other images meaning war;
 And as the man, the poet there is read,
 Winter with me, also!
 Winter on every hand I find;
 Soul, brain, and senses dead,
 The mind no further by the warm senses led,
 The soul weak-spirited in the cold wind,
 More fearless-walk to find itself abroad
 Than the earth's life beneath the frost-scoured sod.
 My lips have thought, and crack,
 By leaving music long untried.
 Beneath the quietude and maddening time
 Draws back constricted in its icy lines
 The genial flames of heart, and tears

With torment and with tension does prepare
 The lush disclosures of the vernal time.
 All joys draw inward to their icy urns,
 Tormented by constraining rime,
 And there
 With undelight and throe prepare
 The bounteous efflux of the vernal time.
 Nor less beneath compulsive Law
 Rebuked draw
 The numbed musics back upon my heart;
 Whose yet-triumphant course I know
 And prevalent pulses forth whall start,
 Like cataracts that with thunderous hoof charge
 the disbanding snow.⁴⁷

N Nature is shown in its totality in the "Kingdom of God."

But ask now the beasts and they shall teach
 thee: and the birds of the air, and they shall
 tell thee. Speak to the earth and it shall answer
 thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell. Who
 is ignorant that the hand of the Lord hath made
 all these things?⁴⁸

Like Job, Thompson learned that nature is but the manifestation of the glory and infinite goodness of God. All turns toward Him as the Author of its being, as the maintenance of its life.

Does the fish soar to find the ocean
 The eagle plunge to find the air--
 That we ask of the stars in motion
 If they rumour of thee there?⁴⁹

If even the natural living things by their very being, give proof of a Living Almighty God, why should we who have rational powers doubt the existence of Him Whom we feel and see about us always, for

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 176.

⁴⁸Job., XII, 7-9.

⁴⁹Connolly, op. cit., p. 293.

With torment and with anguish does prepare
The fish disciples of the vernal time,
All joy drew inward to their icy urns,
Tormented by constricting time,
And came
With undelivered and unspoken prayers
The agonized still of the vernal time,
Nor less beneath compulsive law
Rebated drew
The rapt music back upon my heart;
Whose yet-irresistible course I know
And prevalent pulses forth would start,
Like cascades that with thunderous hoofs charge
The disbanding snow.

Nature is shown in its totality in the Kingdom of God.

But ask now the beasts and they shall teach
them: and the birds of the air, and they shall
tell thee. Speak to the earth and it shall answer
thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell
thee. Who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord hath made
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Like Job, Thompson learned that nature is but the mani-

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Does the fish soar to find the ocean
The eagle plunge to find the air--
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they rumor of thee there?

If even the natural living things by their very being,
give proof of a living Almighty God, why should we who have
rational powers doubt the existence of Him Whom we feel and
see about us always, for

47 Ibid. p. 176.
48 Job., XII, 7-9.
49 Connolly, op. cit., p. 293.

... in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and in Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things consist.⁵⁰

Personification of nature as a motherly, beautiful woman finds frequent repetition in both prose and poetry of Thompson. In "The Hound of Heaven", portraying the soul fleeing from God and turning to nature to find its satisfaction, he symbolizes thus:

I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glittering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laed my own to beat,

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any mild of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.⁵¹

Later, in his essay "Nature's Immortality", Thompson was to repeat this figure, and turn again to nature's "heart":

You speak, and you think she answers you.
It is the echo of your own voice. You think you hear
throbbing of her heart, and it is the throbbing of
your own! I do not believe Nature has a heart; and
I suspect that like many another beauty, she has⁵²
been credited with a heart because of her face.

Thus, in a profusion of nature images, Thompson betrays his intimacy with plant and animal life, with the elements, with the heavenly orbits; and he uses them to translate for

⁵⁰St. Paul, Colossians, I, 16-17

⁵¹Ibid., p. 79

⁵²Ibid., p. 361

... in Him were all things created in heaven and
on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones
or dominions, or principalities, or powers;
all things were created by Him and in Him. And
He is before all, and by Him all things consist. 50

Personification of nature as a motherly, beautiful

woman finds frequent repetition in such prose and poetry of

Thompson. In "The Sound of Heaven", portraying the soul

fleeing from God and turning to nature to find its salvation,

he symbolizes Jesus:

I was heavy with the cross,
When she lit her glittering lights
Round the dark, last sanctified,
I leaped in the morning's dawn,
I leaped and was saddened with all weathers,
Heaven and I were together,
And her sweet tears were with me all the time;
Against the red thro of its sunset-heart
I felt my own to beat.

Nature, poor stepdaughter, cannot share my dream;
Let her, if she will, own me,
Drop you blue peace-vail of sky, and show me
The promise of her tenderness:
Never did any gift of hers once bless
My longing soul. 51

Later, in his essay "Nature's Idealism", Thompson

was to repeat this figure, and turn again to nature's "heart":

You speak, and you think me answers you.
It is the echo of your own voice. You think you hear
throbbing of her heart, and it is the throbbing of
your own. I do not believe Nature has a heart; and
I suspect that like any another beauty, she has
been credited with a heart because of her face.

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1907. Paul, Colorado, I. 18-19
Signed, p. 79
52. 1911, p. 181

earthly minds his fundamental thoughts and ideas, his deep spirituality, his unshakeable religious convictions.

MISCELLANEOUS IDEAS

There are many other images that Thompson employs with equal facility as he does in the nature and literary images. Reference to the harp, the flute, the viol and the organ convey the quality and tone that he wishes to color his poetry.

My fingers thro' best taught to soo
 Thy flame-shouldered psalterion,
 'Till I can translate into mortal wire--
 'Till I can translate passing well--
 The heavenly harping harmony,
 Melodious, sealed, immovable,
 Which makes the boldest painter of the world's desire.¹

Here in this symbolism of music, Thompson is acknowledging his indebtedness to Christ for his poetic gift.

'You stood with writhed fire is edged sharp;
 I leave thee over, 'neath the, 'light of cheer.'
 How the sweet viol paints him to the harp,
 Whose panged sobbing throng tumultuously.²

In the "Sister Songs" he calls the coming of spring with a symphony of music:

'Twas like no earthly instrument,
 Yet had something of them all
 In its rise, and in its fall;
 As if in one sweet consort there were blended
 The archangel's celestial
 Which our adoring instruments recall.
 No heavenly flutes made murmured plain
 To heavenly viols, that again
 --aching with music--wailed back pain;

¹Complete, pp. 111, p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 90.

early in his fundamental thoughts and ideas, his deep
spirituality, his unshakable religious convictions.

CHAPTER IV

MISCELLANEOUS IMAGES

There are many other images that Thompson employs with equal facility as he does in the nature and liturgy images. Reference to the harp, the flute, the viol and the organ convey the quality and tone that he wishes to color his piety.

My fingers thou hast taught to con
Thy flame-chorded psalterion.
'Till I can translate into mortal wire--
Till I can translate passing well--
Thy heavenly harping harmony,
Melodious, sealed, inaudible,
Which makes the dulcet psalter of the world's desire.¹

Here in this symbolism of music, Thompson is acknowledging his indebtedness to Christ for his poetic gift.

'Yon cloud with wrinkled fire is edged sharp;
I leave thee ever, 'saith she, 'light of cheer.'
How the sweet viol plains him to the harp,
Whose panged sobbings throng tumultuously.²

In the "Sister Songs" he hails the coming of spring with a symphony of music:

'Twas like no earthly instrument,
Yet had something of them all
In its rise, and in its fall:
As if in one sweet consort there were blent
Those archetypes celestial
Which our endeavoring instruments recall.
So heavenly flutes made murmurous plain
To heavenly viols, that again
--Aching with music--wailed back pain;

¹Connolly, op. cit., p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 90.

CHAPTER IV

MISCELLANEOUS IMAGES

There are many other images that Thompson employs with equal facility as he does in the nature and literary images. Reference to the harp, the flute, the viol and the organ convey the quality and tone that he wishes to color his poetry.

My fingers thou hast taught to son
 Thy flame-chorded psalteries.
 'Till I can translate into mortal wire--
 'Till I can translate passing well--
 Thy heavenly harp, thy heavenly
 Melodious, aerial, ineffable,
 Which makes the dulcet psalter of the world's desire. 1

Here in this symbolism of music, Thompson is acknowledging his indebtedness to Christ for his poetic gift.

'Yon cloud which withered life is edged sharp;
 I leave thee ever, sister and, 'light of cheer,
 Now the sweet viol plays him to the harp,
 Whose panged sobbing throng tumultuously. 2

In the "Sister Songs" he calls the coming of spring with

a synonymy of music:

'Twas like no earthly instrument,
 Yet had something of them all
 In its rise, and in its fall:
 As it in one sweet concert there were blent
 Those archetypes celestial
 Which our anguishing instruments recall.
 So heavenly flutes made mirrored plain
 To heavenly viols, that again
 --Aching with music--wailed back pain;

¹Connolly, op. cit., p. 66.
²Ibid., p. 90.

Regals release their notes, which rise
 Welling, like tears from heart to eyes;
 And the harp thrills with longing sighs.³

Again, music furnishes a figure to indicate the end of
 the day:

--But lo! at length the day is out.
 At length my Ariel lays his viol by.
 We sing no more to thee, child, he and I;
 The day is lingered out:⁴

Earlier in the "Sister Songs II," he likens the sun to
 a musician scattering his melodies upon earth:

And as yon Apollonian harp-player,
 Yon wandering psalterist of the sky,
 With flickering strings which scatter melody,
 The silver-stoled damsels of the sea,
 Or lake, or fount, or stream,
 Enchants from their ancestral heaven of waters
 To Naiad it through the unfrothing air;⁵

There are numerous other music symbols which are appropriate because music is so closely allied with nature. He so often refers to himself as a "dead, stringless harp."

There was very little contact in the life of Thompson with the world of sport or game. Yet in his life he had a particular liking for cricket. Strangely there is little imagery of cricket, one or two examples such as:

Man swinging wicket-set
 Between
 The Unseen and Seen,⁶

But there are many more concerned with falconry.

³Ibid., p. 22.

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

⁵Ibid., p. 48.

⁶Ibid., p. 25.

Hearts release their notes, which rise
Welling, like tears from heart to eyes;
And the heart's love with longing sighs.

Again, music furnishes a figure to indicate the end of

the day:

--But lo! at length the day is o'er.
At length my trial days are o'er.
We sing no more to thee, O Lord, and I;
The day is hushed out.

Earlier in the "Glorious Song II," he likens the sun to

a musician scattering his melodious song earth:

And as you spiritual harp-player,
You wandering pasteurist of the sky,
With lilting notes which scatter melody,
The silver-scaled lambs of the sea,
Or lake, or forest, or stream,
Enchant from their ancestral heaven of waters
To wait in through the enfolding air?

There are numerous other music symbols which are appro-

priate because music is so closely allied with nature. He

so often refers to himself as a "dead, straggling harp."

There was very little contact in the life of Thompson

with the world of sport or game. Yet in his life he had a

particular liking for cricket. Strangely there is little

imagery of cricket, one or two examples such as:

Man swinging wicket-
The Unseen and Seen.⁶

But there are many more connected with football.

314d., p. 22.
414d., p. 48.
514d., p. 48.
614d., p. 22.

Firm is the man, and set beyond the cast
Of Fortune's game, and the iniquitous hour,
Whose falcon soul sits fast,⁷

Or those brave fledgling fervours of the Saint
Whose heavenly falcon croft doth never taint⁸

Yet still my falcon spirit makes her point
Over the covert where
Thou, sweetest quarry, hast put in from her!⁹

In his poetry on children he sometimes chooses their
games for imagery.

God loves to jest
With children small-a freak
Of heavenly hide-and-seek
Fit
For thy wayward wit.¹⁰

Did all the things
Play can you see me? through their wings?¹¹

Several times the imagery of metals are fittingly
employed generally silver and gold, although iron has been
used.

One to set, and many to sing,
(And a million songs are as song of one)
One to stand, and many to cling,
The many things, and the one thing,
The one that runs not, and the many that run.¹²

No tuned metal known
Unless stricken yields a tone
Be it silver, or set iron like to me.¹³

⁷Ibid., p. 180.

⁸Ibid., p. 180.

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹Ibid., p. 17.

¹²Ibid., p. 169.

¹³Ibid., p. 128.

First is the man, and next beyond the gate
 Of fortune's gate, and the intricate door,
 Whose fabled soul sits fast.
 Or those brave fledgling fervors of the spirit
 Whose heavenly fabled soul sits fast.
 Yet still my fabled spirit makes her point
 Over the covert where
 Thou, sweetest quarry, hast put in from her?
 In his poetry on children he sometimes chooses their
 names for imagery.
 God loves to lead
 With children small-a-trick
 Of heavenly bliss-and-ask
 For any wayward wit.
 Did all the children
 Play can you see me? through their wings?
 Several times the imagery of metals are fittingly
 employed generally silver and gold, although iron has been
 used.
 One to see, and many to sing,
 (And a million songs are as soon of one)
 One to stand, and many to sing,
 The many things, and the one thing,
 The one that runs not, and the many that run.
 No tuned metal known
 Unless strikes yields a tone
 Be it silver, or set iron like to me.

13	128.
12	129.
11	17.
10	185.
9	29.
8	180.
7	180.
6	180.

Here he draws the analogy between himself and the baser metal, iron.

Gold always signifies nobility and grandeur

Bells that from night's great bell-tower hang
in gold,

Whereon God rings His changes manifold.¹⁴

Thompson's poem is as English as the *Scottish* is Italian or Don Quixote is Spanish. Like them it is a universal possession because of the fascination which it derives from a local color that is raised to immortal light. No Italian, raised in the Southern beauty of Europe; no American dwelling in the mountainous regions of vast expanses of the West world or could give Thompson's scenes and people. Thompson is a native Englishman. He sees the color of an English sunset, the sun blazing in the thick London air, or the beauty of the English flowers of the springtime. So picturesquely English are many of his lines, that in a twinkling he waits the reader to a retreat house in the gardens at Highgate where he so often used the Benediction scene to explain nature.

What is this feel of incense everywhere?
Gleams it round folds of the diamond-voiced clouds,
Upwafted by a solemn taurifer,
The night Spirit unknown,
That saligneth the slow earth before the
embannered Thrones?¹

He so vividly described Westminster and Storrington where one may see the Church in which Thompson prayed; or in the heart of London where many go to admire the burial scene, one will recognize the scene that the poet painted

¹⁴Ibid., p. 130.

¹Ibid., p. 99.

Here he draws the analogy between himself and the

basar metal, iron.

Gold always signifies nobility and grandeur

Belia that from night's great self-power hang

in gold.

Wharson God rings his changes manifold. 14

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Thompson's poetry is as English as the Divine Comedy is Italian or Don Quixote is Spanish. Like them it is a universal possession because of the fascination which it derives from a local color that is raised into immortal light. No Italian, raised in the Southern beauty of Europe; no American dwelling in the mountainous regions or vast expanses of the West would or could draw Thompson's scenes and people. Thompson is a native Englishman. He sees the color of an English sunset, the sun blazing in the thick London air, or the beauty of the English flowers of the springtime. So picturesquely English are many of his lines, that in a twinkling he wafts the reader to a retreat house in the gardens at Highgate where he so often uses the Benediction scene to explain nature,

What is this feel of incense everywhere?

Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,
Upwafted by a solemn thurifer,

The might Spirit unknown,
That swingeth the slow earth before the
embannered Throne?¹

He so visibly described Westminster and Storrington where one may see the Church in which Thompson prayed; or in the heath above London where many go to admire the burnished sunsets, one will recognize the scene that the poet painted

¹Ibid., p. 99.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Thompson's poetry is as English as the Divine Comedy is Italian or Don Quixote is Spanish. Like them it is a universal possession because of the fascination which it derives from a local color that is raised into immortal light. No Italian, raised in the Southern beauty of Europe; no American dwelling in the mountainous regions or vast expanses of the West would or could draw Thompson's scenes and people. Thompson is a native Englishman. He sees the color of an English sunset, the sun blazing in the silver London air, or the beauty of the English flowers of the springtime. So platonically English are many of his lines, that in a twinkling he waxes the reader to a retreat house in the gardens at Highgate where he so often uses the Benediction scene to explain nature.

What is this land of incense everywhere?
 Clings it round folds of the blanch-mimed clouds,
 Upward by a solemn laughter,
 The night spirit unknown,
 That swinech the slow earth before the
 embannered Throne?

He so vividly described Westminster and Storrington where one may see the Graven in which Thompson prayed; or in the north above London where many go to admire the palaces suggests, one will recognize the scene that the poet painted

so vividly.

Thompson's poetry is filled with meaning and thought. He used an abundant amount and variety of imagery, mostly metaphor and simile, drawn from many sources; more frequently than otherwise, his figures come from his knowledge of the Old and New Testament and the liturgy of the Church. It is the symbol, the religious symbol, that is most intimately his. Its volume is abundant beyond all expectation. It is this symbol which he knows best and it is the most versatile at his command. For him it is the most natural expression.

The poet seems to have the particular gift to illustrate the realities of the moment in terms of the religious image. The ceremonies of the Church are the most appropriate images to explain the natural order. The sun, the moon, and the stars all represent to Thompson's mind phases or objects of the liturgical services. He builds an altar, as it were, of the skies; and the natural light of the heavens provides the figure for his Benediction scene. Apparently, the two symbols which are most significant to him are the sun and the moon, since he uses the sun to signify Christ and frequently the moon the Blessed Virgin. These are most apt and proper images, for, in the natural order, the light from the moon is but a reflection of the brightest of lights known on earth, the sun.

The mysteries of the Death and Resurrection of Christ provide, throughout Thompson's works, imagery of suffering and ultimate happiness--a theme that blends itself into many

so vividly.

Thompson's poetry is filled with meaning and thought. He used an abundant amount and variety of imagery, mostly metaphor and simile, drawn from many sources; more frequently than otherwise, his figures come from his knowledge of the Old and New Testament and the liturgy of the Church. It is the symbol, the religious symbol, that is most intimately his. Its volume is abundant beyond all expectation. It is this symbol which he knows best and it is the most versatile at his command. For him it is the most natural expression.

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of his poems.

Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory.
 Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields;
 Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,
 Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.

.....

No; while soul, sky, and music bleed together,
 Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
 The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
 Prove them the brood of immortality.²

He makes use of the Sacraments to symbolize the virtues of innocence, strength, courage, repentance, and purity. It is this type of symbolism that is uniquely Thompson's own and which makes his poetry so exalted and original.

If Thompson's scientific knowledge of nature was scant, he knew it well through the eyes of the lover, the observer. He did not peer into the workings of natural life, but he did stand outside and see it and so gained the inspiration to poetize its beauty. The inanimate nature of the wind he employs to signify the act of Creation. Its swiftness and bodilessness illustrate well the act of Will by which God made all things out of nothing. "Let there be light," and light was made; so rapid and intangible is the flight of the wind that it is an apt image of such an act.

The children of the springtime, flowers are subjects of wistful similes. All English flowers are peculiarly his, and again, he knows them with keen, observant fondness, not with the botanist's cleverness.

of his poems.

Even so, O Gross! shine in the victory.
 Thy roots are fast within our latest fields;
 Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,
 Have thy dread symbol only shadow yield.

.....

No; while soul, art, and matter bleed together,
 Let us give thanks even for those trials in me,
 The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
 Prove them the proof of immortality.

He makes use of the sacramental to symbolize the virtues of
 innocence, strength, courage, repentance, and purity. It is
 this type of symbolism that is uniquely Thompson's own and
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If Thompson's scientific knowledge of nature was sound,
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 made all things out of nothing. "Let there be light," and I
 light was made; so rapid and intangible is the flight of the
 wind that it is an apt image of such an act.

The children of the springtime, flowers are subjects
 of wistful smiles. All English flowers are peculiarly his,
 and again, he knows them with keen, observant fondness, not
 with the botanist's cleverness.

Where the thistle lifts a purple crown,
 Six foot out of the turf,
 And the harebell shakes on the windy hill--
 O the breath of the distant surf!--

.....

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
 On the turf and on the spray;
 But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
 Was the Daisy-flower that day!²

The lily of sinlessness, the red rose of suffering, the English daisy, the daffodil, he uses them all and revels in their beautiful simplicity.

Rather frequent are his images of trees. The yew tree, the laurel and cypress are his favorites. Thompson had an idea of his gift of poetry and the laurel tree becomes a symbol of his poetic talent. The cypress is for him a symbol of suffering and mourning. In a bold and picturesque metaphor, says Father Connolly, he pictures the desolate heart as a broken fountain; the tortured mind is a great tree overhanging it and tears dripping from it form a stagnant pool within the heart.

And now my heart is as a broken fount,
 Wherein tear-drippings, stagnate, spilt down ever
 From the dank thoughts that shiver
 Upon the sighful branches of my mind.³

From a blade of grass to the yew tree Thompson reveals the extent of his scope for images. In all the flowers he sees the mystic garden of God and the fair Lady in its midst.

The seasons of the year and particularly winter, which

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 80.

Where the calais lifts a purple crown,
Six foot out of the turf,
And the herald speaks on the windy hill--
O the breast of the distant hill--

Oh, there were flowers in Scotland
On the hill and on the shore;
But the sweetest flower on these hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

The life of loneliness, the red rose of suffering, the
English daisy, the daisy, he uses them all and reveals in
their beautiful simplicity.
Robert Browning is his master of trees. The yew tree,
the laurel and cypress are his favorites. Thompson had an
idea of his gift of poetry and the laurel tree becomes a
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says Robert Browning, he pictures the daisy's heart as a
broken fountain; the tortured mind is a great tree overhanging
it and tears dripping from its form a stagnant pool within the
heart.

And now my heart is as a broken fountain,
Wherein tear-drops, stagnant, gush down ever
From the dark shadows that shiver
Upon the slight branches of my mind.

From a blade of grass to the yew tree Thompson reveals
the extent of his scope for images. In all the flowers he
sees the mystic garden of God and the fair lady in its midst.
The seasons of the year and particularly winter, which

ibid., p. 5.
ibid., p. 80.

represents winter of bleakness, are plentiful. Perhaps it is the very loneliness that he knew so well that caused so many of his lines on this season to be written. Yet how he bursts forth with his imagery of the spring which meant a new life to him and eternity! There are many allusions to the seasons throughout his works. In "July Fugitive" he laments the speedy departure of the summer which meant desolation of spirit to him.

The ocean and fountains are fewer in number but these figures are suitable. Ordinarily they signify tears and disaster. Thompson describes the lesser things, the earthly things by comparing them to the eternal.

He writes sometimes of mundane affairs, such as his country's jubilee. Poets, scientists, and statesmen pass before his view as a kind of pageant in which he delights as a child would in a parade. He is like a man standing back looking upon the world, who smiles upon men, judging not nor cynical. In scarcely a point of his reference to current affairs does he show himself at the height of his poetic power for the lack of interest gives to these poems no emotional value. As has been observed when Thompson is interested in his poetry he has a profusion of imagery and emotional thought.

Thompson is not a man of the world. The joys and sorrows of various classes of men are not within his experience. He does not understand nor can he illustrate by imagery the complexities of the human character. He has lived and has

representative winter of bleakness, are plentiful. Perhaps it is
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He writes sometimes of mundane affairs, such as his
 country's jubilee, boats, scientists, and abandoned grass
 before his view as a kind of regret in which he delights as
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 Thompson is not a man of the world. The joys and sorrows
 of various classes of men are not within his experience. He
 does not understand nor can he illustrate by imagery the
 complexities of the human character. He has lived and has

suffered and knows the hardships that life offers to each one but he knows it only as it affects himself. No doubt this is due to his unnatural life. Even in his contacts with children who are the symbols of innocence he does not understand their childishness but he stands at a distance revering them, afraid of their sacredness and innocence.

I Fear to love thee, Sweet, because
 Love's the ambassador of loss;
 White flake of childhood, clinging so
 To my soiled raiment, thy shy snow
 At tenderest touch will shrink and go.
 Love me not, delightful child.
 My heart, by many snares beguiled,
 Has grown timorous and wild.
 It would fear thee not at all,
 Wert thou not so harmless-small.⁴

From the study of imagery in the poetry of Francis Thompson we may conclude that for him poetry was a means of expressing the most important message to mankind--the magnificence of the eternal world to show forth a shadow of that infinite beauty that awaits the just. For him this is the dominant message conveyed in his work. There have been few poets who have been able to look steadily at life and realize its limitations and the vast expanse of an unlimited eternity. To him this is reality and to this truth he directed all his writings.

All which I took from thee I did but take,
 Not for thy harms,
 But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
 All which thy child's mistake
 Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
 Rise, clasp My hand, and come!⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 16.

⁵Ibid., p. 81.

suffered and knows the hardships that life offers to each one
but he knows it only as it affects himself. No doubt this is
due to his unmastered life. Even in his contacts with children
who are the symbols of innocence he does not understand their
childishness but he stands at a distance revering them, afraid
of their sacredness and innocence.

I fear to love thee, Sweet, because
Love's the ambassador of loss;
While I live of childhood, clinging so
To my solid realm, thy soft glow
At tenderest touch will smolder and go.
Love me not, delightful child,
My heart, by many avenues beguiled,
Has grown timorous and wild.
It would fear thee not at all,
Were thou not so harmless-smile.

From the study of history in the poetry of Francis
Thompson we may conclude that for him poetry was a means of
expressing the most important message to mankind--the
magnificence of the eternal world to show forth a shadow of
that infinite beauty that awaits the just. For him this is
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directed all his writings.

All which I look from thee I did not take,
Not for thy harm,
But that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, O my heart, and come!

Child, p. 16.
Child, p. 81.

ABSTRACT

In this work, the investigator purposed to make an intensive study of the imagery contained in the poetry of Francis Thompson in order thereby to reveal (1) his intimate knowledge of the liturgy of the Church and (2) his deep reverence for nature as a stepping-stone to the Creator of all Beauty, Who is not nature but Who is present in nature.

The images representing the liturgy and nature were selected and explained and the thought that Thompson attempted to convey in his poetry was presented.

From the study of imagery in the poetry of Francis Thompson, it may be concluded that for him poetry was a means of expressing the most important message to mankind--the magnificence of the eternal world to show forth a shadow of that infinite beauty that awaits the just. For him this was the dominant message conveyed in his work. There have been few poets who have been able to look steadily at life and realize its limitations and the vast expanse of an unlimited eternity. To him this was the reality and to this truth he directed all his writings.

APPENDIX

To this work, the present book is added as
an appendix to the study of the history of the poetry of
Francis Thompson in order that it may be seen in its
entirety. The history of the poetry of Thompson and his
contemporaries is a subject of the greatest importance
to the student of the history of the poetry of the
English, and it is not a subject which is treated in
any of the books which are now in the hands of the
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